

28 January 2021

Report of	Assistant Director Place & Client Services	Author	Maggie Ibrahim ☎ 508965
Title	Review of Environmental Sustainability Strategy (proposal for new framework)		
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 a review of the Council's existing framework for managing the programme for sustainability, climate emergency response and carbon reduction.
- 1.2 The review was initiated to assess the need for a new Environmental Sustainability Strategy following expiry of the most recent strategy (2015-2020) and to review the content of the Climate Emergency Action Plan; to ensure it was up to date and relevant. The review concludes that minor gaps could be addressed through a revised strategic framework that ensures the priorities of the Council's Strategic Plan (2020-2023) and current Climate Emergency Action Plan (also 2020) are adequately reflected.
- 1.3 In the revised framework, the proposed overarching strategic themes will be set out in a 'Climate Emergency Strategic Response (CESR) 2021-2023' document. Separating strategic themes from subsequent action planning (within the Climate Emergency Action Plan) in this way allows for more appropriate reviews of strategy and a distinct measurement of tangible actions. This is consistent with the existing approach to reporting progress against the Council's Strategic Plan, where detailed actions and reporting are done via the Strategic Plan Action Plan (also separate documents).
- 1.4 It was always the intention to review the existing Climate Emergency Action Plan regularly. The proposed CESR 2021-2023 will inform a review and update to Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) for 2021-2023. This allows the CEAP to be a true action plan, one that is agile and flexible; enabling changes responsive to both national and local initiatives. It will include a set of quantifiable actions that sit under the strategic themes outlined in the CESR, allowing for greater accountability and effective outcome reporting.
- 1.5 If agreed, a draft CESR 2021-2023 and a resultant revised CEAP will be updated and shared with the Panel at the next meeting in March.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To agree the sustainability and climate emergency response framework outlined in this report, including:
 - the development of a 'Climate Emergency Strategic Response (CESR) 2021-2023' document.

- a revised Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) that sits beneath the strategic themes of the CESR 2021-23 and sets out the detail

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To create a strategic framework for the programme of work linked to the current Strategic Plan priorities, with themes that run directly from the Council's current Strategic Plan, through to actions outlined in a reviewed Climate Emergency Action Plan. This will allow greater measurement and accountability for the programme in future.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Panel could consider an alternative framework to replace the now expired Environment Sustainability Strategy.
- 4.2 The Panel could consider an alternative timeframe for the CESR document and subsequent CEAP update.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 In 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency, committing to become net zero carbon by 2030. In meeting this challenge, there is a need to review and update the existing frameworks for the Council's sustainability and carbon reduction strategies.
- 5.2 A review of existing frameworks and documents has been undertaken and a new framework is proposed for the Council's sustainability and carbon reduction strategy. This includes the development of a Climate Emergency Strategic Response (2021-2023)' document (see Figure 1 below for diagram).
- 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 process to develop the Climate Emergency Strategic Response 2021- 2023 document included:
- a review of strategic documents related to sustainability and climate change (see Background Documents Table 1 below)
 - a review of plans related to sustainability and climate change
 - a gap analysis of any themes missing from current plans and the previous Environment & Sustainability Strategy.
- 5.5 The review of the documents highlighted four existing documents:
- The Council's **Strategic Plan (2020-2023)**: during 2020 the Council developed a Strategic Plan which includes the theme 'Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability' as one of its six strategic themes. Its development was supported by a review of evidence.
 - The Council's **Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS)** covered a period until the end of 2020. This strategy was updated with evidence, plans, and progress.
 - The **Carbon Management Plan 2015-2020** provided actions for carbon reduction and progress updates we are included in the ESS Progress Reports.
 - In 2020 the Council developed a **Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP)** to set out an initial strategy and plan for the Council's climate emergency response. This plan articulated strategy through six themes. It also included actions to be taken up and reviewed in the short term.
- 5.6 The review highlighted opportunities for a new sustainability and carbon document, the Climate Emergency Strategic Response (CESR) 2021-2023, to improve connections between the Council's current Strategic Plan (2020-2023) by including a section on 'Build community resilience through our organisational behaviour change & Partnership working'. This will mean the proposed themes in the CESR then broadly capture all themes from the current suite of documents.
- 5.7 The following potential themes have been identified so far from all documents and are intended to be included in the Climate Emergency Strategic Response document:
- I. Carbon emission reduction
 - II. Conserve and enhance biodiversity
 - III. Walking and cycling around Colchester
 - IV. Organisational culture & decision Making
 - V. Ensure sustainable planning, development & housing

- VI. Sustainable Waste Management and supporting residents to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- VII. Adaptation & Environmental Stewardship Partnerships and Community Action

Work will be undertaken to group and organise these themes in the most effective manner so they link strategic priorities to resulting actions in a new Climate Emergency Action Plan.

- 5.8 The intention is not to create a detailed and lengthy document, rather a concise yet impactful articulation of the Councils approach. It is proposed that a draft version of the Climate Emergency Strategic Response (CESR) 2021-2023 will be presented to Panel at the next meeting (March) for review.
- 5.9 Concurrently, the Climate Emergency Action Plan will be revamped according to the CESR priority headings for clear alignment. alongside a review of the Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020).
- 5.10 This creates a framework that ensures plans remain action based; and links back to the themes of the strategy. The approach is outlined as a diagram in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Current and proposed strategic framework:



6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 The CESR 2021-23 will continue to support the importance of equality and diversity in all aspects of borough life. Through its component parts, the current Strategic Plan and CEAP have been subject to equality impact assessments.

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 work programme (as outlined in previous reports) and will be included in the action plan and strategy and actioned under each of the themes.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 The development of this framework and the Climate Emergency Strategic Response (CESR) document and Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) will be updated on our website. In addition, once the CESR is produced future promotion will be undertaken to ensure continued promotion of climate related strategic activity via new and existing communications channels including direct, in person, in the media, on social media platforms and on its website.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 There are no financial implications directly related to the production of the documents. The wider actions will require individual budgets.

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 is one of the key reasons why the Sustainability Strategy, which recently expired, needs to be replaced with a Climate Emergency Strategic Response 2021-23 and the Climate Emergency Action Plan updated to align with this strategic response.

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.

Existing Documents	
Strategic Plan and Strategic Plan Action Plan	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	Strategic priorities and key activities to promote sustainability and carbon reduction.		
Climate Risk Assessment (2009)	Assessment of climate impacts on the Borough.		
Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2015-2020	<p>PLANS</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability Strategy Delivery Plan 2015/16</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability Delivery Plan Update 2015/16</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability Delivery Plan 16/17</p> <p>No Delivery Plans or Updates after 2017</p>	<p>PROGRESS</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability Strategy Progress Report 2015/16</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability Strategy Progress Report 2017 final</p>	<p>EVIDENCE</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability Strategy Evidence Base</p> <p>Update for ESS Evidence Base July 2016</p> <p>Evidence Update 2017</p>
Climate Emergency Declaration 2019	Commitment to zero net carbon by 2030.		
Local Authority Carbon Management (LACM) Plan	Updates were provided through the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Progress Reports.		
Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report (annual) 2019	Comes out yearly April-March.		
Pathway modelling and scope 3 footprint analysis.	One off and fed into the CEAP.		