


17th September 2020

Report of	Place and Client Services	Author	Ben Plummer
Title	Climate Emergency – One Year On		 508965
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress that has been made with the environmental sustainability agenda at the Council since the Climate Emergency declaration on 17th July 2019. Next steps for each of the environmentally themed projects and workstreams occurring at the Council are also summarised.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.

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 On the 17th July 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency, committing the organisation to becoming carbon neutral in all its operations and services by 2030. Since this declaration, the Council published a Climate Emergency Action Plan in January 2020 which details key themes and initial actions that the Council intends to take to help reach the carbon neutral target.
- 5.2 There are several key Council projects and workstreams which are focussed on the environment and sustainability, and progress with these is discussed below. In this report, recent progress on each of the projects is highlighted. Background and additional information on each project can be found in appendix 1.

Northern Gateway Heat Network - Progress and next steps:

- 5.3 The installation of the infrastructure that will connect the heat pump and the boreholes started being installed in July 2020 as part of a contract to develop “The Walk” (previously known as “The Boulevard”). This includes underground infrastructure installed at the same time as this main pedestrian/cycleway through the Colchester Northern Gateway. The tender of the design and the build of the central Energy Centre and heat distribution pipes will then commence later in 2020, with construction of the energy centre due to start in Spring 2021.
- 5.4 The heat network will be the biggest of its kind, and will provide clean energy to 350 homes on the Colchester Amphora Homes Ltd (Mill Road) site (with 30% affordable homes owned by the Council), another 300 homes on the health campus, a small medical facility and nearly 500,000 square feet of commercial floorspace.
- 5.5 In addition, an initial feasibility study has been commissioned with funding from the Greater South East Energy Hub for a micro grid to cover other areas of the Northern Gateway development which will report on the viability in September 2020. A microgrid would offer additional clean energy using Council assets to provide a longer term income in addition to the environmental benefits.

Planning and Climate Change - Progress and Next steps:

- 5.6 The Place Strategy team have been exploring various ways to deliver further environmental and sustainability measures through the planning system.
- 5.7 These measures, which the Place Strategy Team are exploring, were included in CBC’s Climate Emergency Action Plan. The progress on each of the actions identified can be found in appendix 1. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on progress with these measures as Officers have had to focus on core areas of work and some Officers have had to deal directly with the impacts of the pandemic. All measures will continue to be progressed by the Place Strategy Team, in collaboration with the Transport and Sustainability Team where appropriate.
- 5.8 A number of planning applications have been determined with conditions to include electric vehicle charging points. This includes the Council’s own developments. The Colchester Northern Gateway Sports Park will be the first of these to provide the EVCPs when it opens in January 2021, followed by housing developments that will be completed and occupied from March 2021. These demonstrate how the Council is leading by example (the affordable housing also

including renewable energy through air source heat pumps and other environmental sustainability measures).

Clean Air for Colchester (DEFRA Behaviour Change Project) - Progress and next steps:

- 5.9 The results from the Clean Air for Colchester Project engagement phase and the Clean Air Survey are being used to design the Colchester wide 'switch off' campaign and to identify a resident group in Colchester to work with to increase the proportion of journeys made through walking and cycling.
- 5.10 The findings and insight from the survey and public engagement can be viewed in the report ['Findings from the Clean Air for Colchester Community Engagement'](#) with some key findings of this report highlighted in Appendix 1.
- 5.11 The 'switch off' signage messaging will be installed, subject to planning permission, within two of Colchester's Air Quality Management Areas at two traffic light junctions and the East Gates rail crossing where a large proportion of queuing stationary traffic is often present, especially at peak times. The launch of the 'switch' off campaign is due late September. The objectives of the study are to:
- Test the effectiveness of messaging over a period of months.
 - Identify if driver fatigue is a factor leading to a decrease in switch off rates and if so at what point messages stop being effective.
 - Explore whether rotating messages maintains positive driver behaviour around switching off their engines.
 - Test the effectiveness of messages simultaneously at traffic light junctions and rail crossings in Colchester.
 - Investigate the impact of switching off engines on air quality.

eCargo Bike Project - Progress and next steps:

- 5.12 Following a procurement exercise, the majority of bikes have now been ordered and the whole fleet is anticipated to have arrived by mid to late September. The legal agreement between the champions and CBC is complete. Storage for the CBC bikes and the pool bikes is being arranged as well as insurance and risk assessments. A communication plan will be formulated, and a [web page](#) has been put together prior to an official launch date being arranged.

Council culture - Progress and next steps:

- 5.13 Engagement and education is going to play a vital part of the progress over the next few years. Embedding sustainability into hearts and minds will be key to maximising delivery. A number of initiatives are being prepared, including the introduction of a need to consider climate change from the initial outset of new projects, and the inclusion of this in PIDs.
- 5.14 To help with implementation of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, a Climate Emergency Officer was employed at the beginning of February 2020. This officer will aim to embed environment and sustainability considerations within the Council's culture amongst other tasks. Some tasks the officer has carried out in his role since starting are outlined below.

- Carbon Trust analysis – collecting data for the recent analysis conducted by the Carbon Trust (see later in the report)
- Environmental Impact Checklist – A checklist of key questions for considering the environmental impacts of projects has been produced for project managers to use when completing the Project Initiation Document (PID).

5.15 Some next steps for this workstream include:

- Sustainable procurement: The Council will be introducing a new way to measure and embed social value within its procurement processes through an online platform managed by the company Social Value Portal. The officer is and will further be considering how to use this process to gain further information on the environmental performance of contractors the Council seeks to work with.
- Educational programme for staff: Resources to conduct a climate change awareness and training programme have been researched. Next steps will involve agreeing to how this training will be delivered, finding a budget for its delivery and prioritising officers to take part in this training.
- Further embedding of Environment in Council culture: This includes the assessment of the environmental implications of Council projects in progress and closure reports and increasing information available to new starters and officers more widely on the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Woodland Project (and biodiversity) - Progress and next steps:

5.16 After a successful first year of planting, tree planting for the second year will resume in November 2020, with an emphasis on ensuring that tree planting not only enhances the natural beauty of areas and increases carbon storage, but to also benefit biodiversity.

5.17 Following the announcement by the Council to phase out the use of glyphosate in Council operations and services last year, a policy on the use of Glyphosate in Council operations is being produced.

5.18 Some next steps for this workstream include:

- Planning the 2nd tree planting season due to begin in November 2020. 11,200 trees are to be planted in this season.
- Investigating the possibility of creating a tree seed nursery at the Big Garden at Highwoods Country Park.
- Continued collaboration with local experts and interested stakeholders such as the National History Society to ensure the protection of biodiversity is central to the approach taken with tree planting.
- Identifying areas along the Colchester Orbital, the 14-15 mile walking and cycling route in and around Colchester, that can be 'greened'.
- Establishing open spaces to be left to rewild on a trial basis and investigating the effect this has on biodiversity within these areas.
- Identifying sites for urban tree planting in Colchester.

Carbon Trust analysis - Progress and next steps:

- 5.19 Further to their analysis of the Council's carbon footprint in financial year 2018-19, the Council commissioned the Carbon Trust to undertake some further analysis. This included conducting pathway analysis to map out CBC's emissions to 2030 based on national and Council level trends and policies, and calculating the Council's Scope 3 footprint (i.e. indirect emissions from the Council's operations and services such as procured goods and services, leased buildings, equity investments of the Council and staff commuting).
- 5.20 The full findings from these two pieces of analysis are included in the [Carbon Trust report](#). Some headline results from these two pieces of analysis are outlined below.
- 5.21 Scope 1 and 2 Pathway Analysis:
- Based on several key Council projects, the Carbon Trust project the Council's emissions to reduce by 3,401 tCO₂e (tonnes of CO₂ equivalent) to 2,780 tCO₂e by 2030
 - The Council aim to have a full electric fleet by 2030, seek to decarbonise heating systems (swapping to electric heating systems where possible) and consider further use of renewable electricity on, or to supply, Council operated buildings
- 5.22 Scope 3 footprint:
- The Scope 3 carbon footprint was estimated to be 31,842 tCO₂e, making up 84% of the Council's total carbon footprint
 - The majority of emissions came from equity investments; particularly Colchester Borough Homes (14,829 tCO₂e), and from procured goods and services (12,870 tCO₂e).
- 5.23 Key recommendations from the report:
- Undertake feasibility studies for large projects such as the retrofit programme for the Council's sheltered housing stock and electrification of the Council's fleet.
 - Continue to pursue easy win technologies to decarbonise the Council estate
 - Begin to set out the principles of an offsetting strategy for the Council
- 5.24 Following the Carbon Trust pathway analysis, it is important that the Council follows up on this by deciding on specific actions and projects to take forward in order to lower the Council's carbon footprint. The Council will have to consider this in light of the Covid-19 crisis, thinking about how Council buildings and services will operate in a post Covid-19 environment.
- 5.25 Work has already started on tackling climate change and sustainability in the housing stock. A programme of works is being planned, to be agreed and procured for commencement in 2021. This will be supplementary works to the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) led by the Client Team and CBH.
- 5.26 Climate change will also be embedded into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy which are due for review in 2021 and will come into force from 1 April 2022. In addition, as part of the Councils acquisition programme 100 homes acquired by the Council (as part of the HRA's

New Council Housing Programme) will undergo retrofitting to improve their environmental sustainability before being occupied.

Council Covid-19 Recovery Programme - Progress and next steps:

- 5.27 In this report it is worth acknowledging that the way many of the Council's services operate have changed due to the Covid-19 crisis. These services have adapted well, and it has provided an insight into new ways of working that would have perhaps been harder to imagine before this crisis.
- 5.28 Below is summarised some actions, both planned and those being undertaken, to ensure the Council's recovery has environmental sustainability at its heart.
- 5.29 Economy:
- Collaboration with Essex County Council (ECC) to facilitate the implementation of the 'Safer, Greener, Healthier' transport infrastructure changes to the High Street.
 - Examining the possibility of trialling new models of deliveries made by businesses to consumers' homes using eCargo bikes and electric vehicles.
 - Working with local partners to ensure a greater emphasis is placed on travel planning, to reduce travel to and from work.
- 5.30 Council:
- Ensured that Council Decision Making meetings could be carried out online. This process has reduced the travel that members would normally have to make to these meetings.
 - Helping to enable most Council officers to work from home during the lockdown period and beyond.
 - Thinking about ways to reimagine how Council services will run with new priorities and budget strategy, which will have environmental sustainability as a key focus.
- 5.31 Customer:
- Developing ways to carry out more services in a digital way rather than in-person such as those that were delivered through the Community Hub.
- 5.32 Communities:
- Working with Community 360 to map opportunities for local green prescribing for wellbeing.
 - Supporting partner organisations to develop flexible working practices, including homeworking as part of the way in which they operate going forward.
 - Looking to set up 'communities forums' to reduce inequalities across the borough, particularly among those in minority and/or faith groups. It is hoped that this work can be linked into the climate emergency workstream at the Council to ensure that any actions that are made to benefit the wider environment and tackle climate change within the borough do not isolate any of these groups.

Overall summary:

- 5.33 Significant progress has been made on several Council projects and workstreams within the last year since the Climate Emergency declaration, and it is important this is sustained. However, it is important that the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan is further refined, and specific tangible actions identified to ensure progress on delivering the plan does not slow. There is also a need to ensure steps are taken to reduce emissions across the Borough. The Council's emissions only contribute to a small proportion of those in the borough, meaning that if big reductions in carbon emissions are to be seen, action will also have to be taken on the wider borough scale.

6. Standard References

- 6.1 There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; consultation, financial; or community safety, equality and diversity, human rights, publicity, health and safety, risk management or environmental and sustainability implications.
- 6.2 However, given the nature of the projects and workstreams described, they all reflect and consider the Council's declaration of a climate emergency. In this way, they have all considered the potential negative and positive implications on the environment and sustainability.