

29 January 2020

Report of	Assistant Director of Environment	Author	Rory Doyle
Title	Climate Emergency Action Plan		☎ 507855
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress and current activity in addition to seeking approval for proposed action to be taken to address the Climate Emergency declared by full Council in July 2019.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the findings set out in the Climate Action Planning Report prepared by the Carbon Trust (Appendix A)
- 2.2 To approve the recommendations from the Conservation, Environment and Sustainability Task and Finish Group as set out below:

(a) The Climate Emergency Action Plan be approved, subject to the inclusion and clarification of Scope 3 elements to the section entitled “Scope of the Carbon Emission Target”.

(b) The Climate Emergency Action Plan be kept under review and that the Council commit to a target in respect of additional Scope 3 emissions once measurement of this wider carbon footprint has been undertaken.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Council has declared a climate emergency in recognition of the urgent need to take action to address global warming and the crisis being created by unavoidable climate change.

In declaring a climate emergency, the Council has made tackling climate change a New Strategic Priority and our initial Climate Emergency Action Plan (Appendix B) reflects this.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. Background Information

- 5.1 In July 2019 the Council unanimously approved a motion to declare a climate emergency. The Council also resolved to:

Support the newly formed Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group to consider the following actions:

Commission an environmental audit which identifies pollution hotspots, wildlife biodiversity and environmental health issues, and an urban impact assessment with an aim to identify areas of improvement across the borough.

Consult expert opinions in the field, as appropriate.

Collaborate with regional and neighbouring local authorities, as well as communities, to encourage practical measures to reduce emissions, reduce carbon footprints and develop community-based renewable energy projects.

Encourage all sectors of the economy across the borough to take steps to reduce waste and become carbon neutral.

Develop a roadmap for Colchester Borough Council to go carbon neutral by 2030. Report to Cabinet and Full Council within six months with an action plan setting out conservation and environmental sustainability goals to address targets by 2030; incorporating proposals on the investment implications of this proposed activity.

Pledge to ensure future housing and community development projects meet a carbon-neutral standard by 2030

Call upon the Leader of the Council to write to the Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth requesting that national policy is urgently developed to reflect the seriousness of the current emergency, and to release funds to local authorities, encouraging them to take the necessary measures at local level.

- 5.2 The Carbon Trust commended the action the Council has taken through previous carbon reduction strategies which have seen over £1.5m invested in projects. From a baseline in 2008 of 10,150 tCO₂e the Council has achieved a 40% reduction in carbon emissions one year ahead of the 2020 target.
- 5.3 Action taken extends to more than carbon reduction. The Council has committed to phasing out the use of glyphosate herbicides as soon as practically possible and are exploring alternative methods to controlling weeds and encouraging bio-diversity. We are also working with other organisations and businesses in the borough to encourage them to stop using these herbicides.
- 5.4 The Council continues to take action to address poor air quality in the Borough and encourage people to connect with nature, green space and be more physically active through walking and cycling, particularly for short journeys through our Air Quality Management Areas.
- 5.5 Thousands of trees have been planted at sites in the Borough as part of the first year of the Colchester Woodland Project that will eventually see more than 200,000 trees planted across Colchester in the next five years.
- 5.6 The Climate Emergency Action plan aims to build on the progress made already and address the urgent challenge faced by the Council; one which is made harder because, compared to most places, Colchester has already completed many of the 'easier', 'quick win' projects. This means that moving forward at pace to achieve our targets will require significant investment of time, resource and energy from the Council, Central Government and our partners and citizens.

5.7 It is important to note this is the initial version of the Action Plan, it is only a starting point in a ten year journey. The Council will adapt as we go and update this plan regularly alongside the development of a new Environment & Sustainability Strategy and a Carbon Management Plan that will reflect many of the aspirations and actions from this plan. Meanwhile we will continue to act boldly on climate change.

5.8 The Climate Emergency Action Plan, in summary:

- Provides an assessment of Colchester Borough Councils' emissions and their sources and begins to explore likely future scenarios for the next decade.
- Demonstrates that the Council has achieved its 2020 emissions reduction target one year early and sets a goal for the Council to be Net Carbon zero by 2030.
- Demonstrates what action has already been taken and how this crisis is being addressed through partnership via the Conservation Environment & Sustainability Task & Finish Group.
- Highlights our commitment to work with the whole community in responding to the climate emergency and to work with other local authorities and partners to share learning and knowledge.
- Sets out existing and new actions that will be delivered and where necessary developed further to:
 - Embed the Climate Emergency in Organisational Culture & Decision Making
 - Create a Roadmap to reduce our Carbon footprint to net zero by 2030
 - Provide for environmental sustainability through Planning, Development & Sustainable Travel
 - Embed Sustainability through the Management of Waste and Recycling
 - Undertake Mitigation, Climate Adaptation and Environmental Stewardship
 - Build Community Resilience through Enabling, Behaviour Change & Partnership Working

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 There will be no equality, diversity and human rights implications in undertaking this work.

7. Strategic Plan

7.1 Activity to meet the requirements of the Climate Change Motion will potentially deliver against all streams of the Strategic Plan.

8. Consultation

8.1 Several experts and interest groups have been consulted through the work of the Conservation, Environment & Sustainability Task & Finish Group to date. Work will continue as part of the ongoing development and review of the Climate Emergency Action Plan to identify approaches to ongoing resident and wider stakeholder engagement on climate emergency issues.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 Working with businesses, schools, communities and citizens across the Borough will be critical. This is not something the Council can do on its own. Communication and

engagement with all stakeholders is and will continue to be a key strand of this work. An engagement and communications plan will be developed as part of our Climate Emergency Action.

10. Environmental and Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 Environmental and Climate Change Implications are fully considered through this work. Indeed it is as a result of this work that key decisions are now assessed for their likely environmental impact, including on the Council's commitment to reach a net carbon zero target by 2030.

11. Financial implications

- 11.1 As part of sound budgeting practice the Council identified an initial budget investment of £50K to be allocated for this work. This has been used to commission the report referred to above, undertake initial scoping work, gather more evidence and recruit a dedicated Climate Emergency Project Officer.
- 11.2 As one of the Council's New Strategic Priorities further funds will be made available to progress action against our ambitions as set out in the 2020/21 Revenue Budget, New Strategic Priorities and Medium-Term Financial Forecast Cabinet Report agreed by Cabinet in November 2019.
- 11.3 There are likely to be considerable additional financial implications associated with responding to the Climate Emergency albeit there may also be opportunities to partially mitigate these through other policies and associated financial savings e.g. energy costs. Even then it will be difficult to set out clear and actual costs for the next ten years at this stage. As work develops and further funding is required, actions and schemes will be subject to individual business cases and financial evaluation to assess associated costs as required.

12. Community Safety and Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 12.1 Responding to the Climate Emergency will have positive impacts on health and wellbeing through tackling areas such as air quality. There are also many physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits associated with solutions such as increased physical activity and connection to nature and open space associated with active travel, cycling and walking etc.

13 Health and Safety

- 13.1 There are no health and safety implications at this stage.

14 Risk Management Implications

- 14.1 The motion approved by Council sets ambitious targets and without robust prioritisation and risk management they will be difficult to achieve. Effective programme management will need to be utilised to ensure targets are achieved.
- 14.2 Rising to the challenge and tackling our climate emergency will not be achieved through Council action alone as it is a highly complex issue. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in particular will require systems leadership across multiple sectors, communications and behavioural change that will result in adapted lifestyles, and potentially fundamentally different patterns of development and travel in the long term. Ultimately perceptions of success will need to evolve over time. Our emergent programmes will be related to the

degree of control and influence the Council directly has and our acknowledgement that partnership working across the region will be essential for us to address the challenge.

- 14.3 There are mixed perceptions of climate change within communities across Colchester that manifest into a spectrum of views which the Council are expected to navigate in the development of its action plan, the prioritisation of resource and communication to residents.
- 14.4 The resourcing requirements to undertake systems leadership and the change programme required will be significant. The scale of change required is unprecedented.