

13 January 2022

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 7th December 2021.

1.2 Progress includes:

- **Air Quality sensor** locations have been identified and are located through Colchester, covering the air quality management areas. These sensors will enable air pollution levels to be monitored in real time, enabling more comprehensive analysis to be carried out on the effect of different behavioural initiatives on air quality.
- **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-February 2022.
- **Electric vehicles** for the Council's fleet are due to arrive 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.
- **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.
- **Further grant funding for improving energy efficiency** has been secured by the Council from Government for delivery between March 2022-March 2023. Funding came from the [Sustainable Warmth Competition](#), and will fund energy efficiency improvements in homes in Colchester. The eligibility requirements will be similar to the LAD scheme phase 2. Communications will be organised in the coming months about this grant funding.
- **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.

- **Essex Schools Green Day** has been planned in for 6th July 2022. The day will be about raising environmental awareness in schools and getting schools to demonstrate what they are doing to protect the environment and tackle climate change. The Council will be offering support on this day, as well as contacting other organisations in the borough to see what support they can offer. This follows on from the Go Green Schools project the Council has been doing, which has engaged with 7 primary schools to understand good environmental practice in schools, challenges faced to doing more and what support would be welcome.
- An **assessment of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan** will soon be published by Climate Emergency UK, an organisation set up to document the climate emergency declarations and plans of local authorities, as well as provide support to help local authorities respond to their declarations. The group have assessed all existing climate emergency action plans/strategies from local authorities across the UK against a variety of criteria, and these will be published in a 'scorecard assessment'.
- The Council will be participating in a **challenge lab** workshop with the University of Essex in early 2022. The challenge lab involves university researchers collaborating with an external organisation to tackle key challenges facing the organisation using existing research and knowledge of academic researchers. It will be a two day workshop focussing on topics such as organisational behaviour change, climate adaptation, domestic energy efficiency and transport emission targets.
- A **participatory budgeting presentation** was recently co-ordinated by University of Essex researchers and presented to Council staff, discussing the potential of participatory budgeting for engaging the community around Council decisions and projects. Staff found the session informative, and use of this participatory method will be explored for piloting in future projects.
- **Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC)** have recently created a new anchor institutions climate action working group which the Council will take part in in the new year. The group will collaborate for form a 'Year of Climate Action' to explore collective action on climate change across Essex and contribute to the delivery of recommendations in the ECAC ['Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral'](#) report.

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 progress made to date and has the chance to feedback on ongoing work.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not Applicable

5. Key updates

- 5.1 New air quality sensors are being installed in Colchester to monitor air pollution levels in real time. A map showing where all the sensors will be located is shown in figure 1. Locations include on St John's Street, Head Street, North Hill, High Street, Brook Street, East Street and Mersea Road. Each monitor will be co-located with a traffic camera (vivacity cameras), monitoring traffic count.

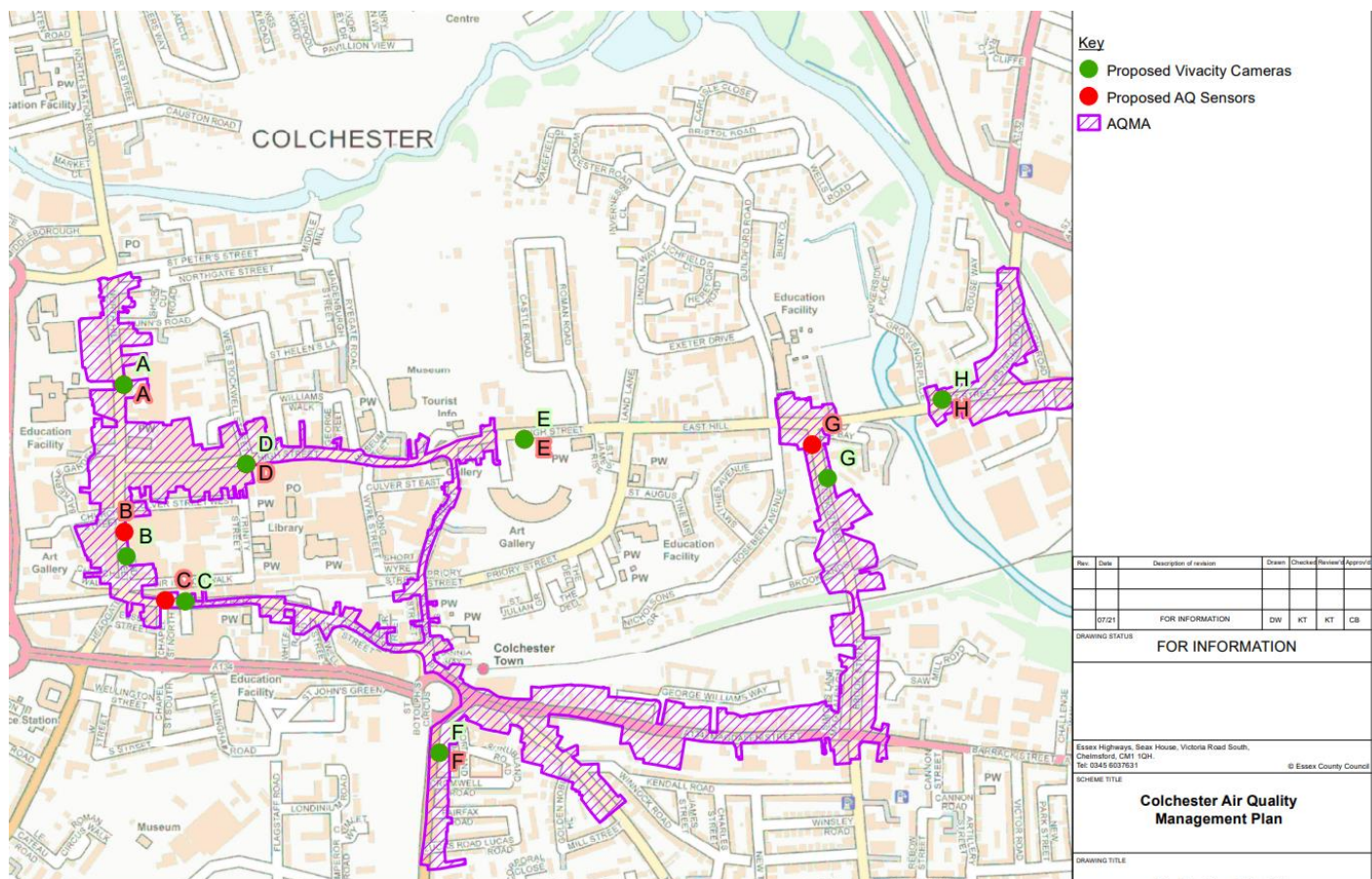


Figure 1: Location of new real time air quality monitors in Colchester

- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 Throughout November-February 2022, the Council is 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, eliminating the use of plastic guards. Planting days have been successful so far, engaging the local community. On one of the planting days at Magnolia Drive, about 100 pupils and staff from Unity Primary Academy came down to help plant trees.

- 5.5 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 (private or social) 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.
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 The Council has been successful in securing further grant funding to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Colchester through the [Sustainable Warmth Competition](#). £689,823 has been secured to deliver energy efficiency improvements to homes, where residents are on low incomes and living in low energy efficiency homes. Part of the funding will go towards securing a new officer to lead the project and ensure it is communicated effectively to the community, along with other associated administration costs. The funding will be delivered between March 2022-March 2023, giving continued support beyond the LAD phase 2 scheme that ends in March 2022.
- 5.8 Essex County Council have 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, 2023 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.
- 5.9 The Essex Schools 'Green Day' will be taking place on 6th July 2022. The day ran for the first time on 8th July 2021, organised by the lead of the [Multi Schools Council](#). The Council would like to have more schools participating this year, as well as more support available to schools. The Council has already started reaching out to organisations in the borough that could offer support, as well as putting together a support offering itself. Support councillors can offer local schools in their ward would be appreciated. This follows on from the 'Go Green Schools' project the Council received funding to deliver from the Net Zero Innovation Programme co-ordinated by the Local Government Association and University College London. The project has engaged with 7 primary schools and has given the Council an insight into good environmental practices in schools, where challenges lie and where further support could be provided.
- 5.10 An assessment of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan is due to be published in early 2022. This is part of a [wider assessment](#) of all UK local authority climate emergency action plans/strategies conducted by the organisation [Climate Emergency UK](#). The assessment is a review of what is written in the action plans, rather than how actions have been implemented, at this stage. Action plans have been assessed against many different criteria such as Governance, mitigation and adaptation, commitment and integration, community engagement and communication, amongst others. All plans will be marked on a 'scorecard', enabling comparison of performance between councils. The

Council has reviewed the preliminary assessment of the action plan and will be responding to the final assessment in 2022, with an update of our action plan.

- 5.11 The Council is participating in a challenge lab organised by the University of Essex. The challenge lab process brings together university researchers/staff and staff from an external organisation to brainstorm ideas to tackle a challenge faced by the organisation. University staff apply their own research to think of project proposals to tackle the challenges and these are then posed to an external panel who assess the quality of the proposals. Several ideas are then progressed for implementation. For this challenge lab, the Council is submitting the challenges of climate adaptation, increasing the uptake of domestic energy efficiency/retrofit, organisational behaviour change and setting appropriate targets for transport behaviour change to be explored.
- 5.12 Council officers recently received a presentation from University of Essex researchers on the potential of participatory budgeting for engaging the community in Council projects and decision making. Discussions were held between Council colleagues about the potential for participatory budgeting and there was interest in piloting this participatory approach in a Council project.
- 5.13 Essex Climate Action Commission has set up an anchor institution climate action working group, of which the Council will be participating in in the new year. The group aims to co-ordinate a Year of Climate Action, and identify how different institutions can collaborate to contribute to achieving the recommendations detailed in the ECAC ['Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral'](#) report.
- 5.14 For further information on updates in the Climate Emergency Action Plan, see appendix 1.

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.
- 14.5 It is also vitally important that schools are engaged with responding to climate change and reducing their environmental impact. Inspiring the younger generations to care for the environment is important as this behaviour needs to be more mainstreamed if we are to tackle climate change to the greatest degree possible.