

Environment and Sustainability Panel

21 September 2023

Present: Councillor Steph Nissen (Chair)
Councillor Tracey Arnold (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Pam Cox
Councillor Paul Dundas
Councillor Andrew Ellis
Councillor Mark Goacher
Councillor Natalie Sommers

Substitutes: Councillor Kayleigh Rippingale for Councillor Molly Bloomfield
Councillor Carl Powling for Councillor Sue Lissimore
Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell for Councillor Venessa Moffat

Also present:

100. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED that: the minute of the meetings of 22 June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

101. Have Your Say!

Steven Vince attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! arrangements. He was a villager from West Mersea and a member of the Open Space Society. He requested that signs were made for village green 241, Coast Road, West Mersea. The owner of village green 241 was the City Council who were aware that they were breaching the Commons Act, Enclosure Act and the Countryside Act in respect of this Green, which was a criminal offence. Despite letters to the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer of the Council, Mr Vince had not been provided with an update on what action had been taken to uphold the law. A city funded village green sign needed to be erected, and an update was requested.

The Chair of the Panel acknowledged the representation which Mr Vince had made, and confirmed that Officers would be in contact with him within 7 working days.

Gillian Mockridge attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! arrangements. She considered that the proposed introduction of wheeled bins for garden refuse collection was a double taxation as

she had already paid for this collection as part of her Council Tax. She had not been aware of any public consultation before the decision to charge was made in February 2023. The Council's decision discriminated against people with gardens, which were increasingly important for the environment and people's physical and mental wellbeing. The charge for a wheeled bin was significant, and the capacity of the bins was smaller than the old garden waste bags meaning that even a modest garden would require more than 1 bin. Garden waste bags were 99% fit for purpose except when they are dopped after being emptied, when the wind could blow them away, and were easy to store when not in use. Wheeled bins were considered to present a hazard for pedestrians as they would be left outside properties permanently where they could cause an obstruction. Wheeled bins could not easily be used in gardens with multiple levels, unlike the old bags, and they could be difficult for the elderly to handle on slopes and up and wooden steps, leading to hedges not being pruned and an increase in fly tipping. When garden bags had been introduced, the compost was supposed to be made into soil improver and sold to the public, what had happened to this idea? The old waste bags allowed air to aid the composting process, which was far better than an enclosed bin which would be difficult to clean. Mrs Mockridge could not see very many people registering to pay for the bins in the current financial climate.

Rosa Tanfield, Head of Neighbourhood Services, attended the meeting and responded to Mrs Mockridge. The decision to introduce garden waste charging had not been an easy one to make, but the Council faced the same difficult financial climate that its residents did. The Council had to address a budget gap between income which the Council was able to generate and the costs of providing essential services to residents. In February 2023, Cabinet had made difficult decisions on a variety of saving schemes and income generating opportunities. A number of options had been explored when considering garden charging and one of these would have been to stop garden waste collection entirely. The alternative to stopping the collection was to charge for it, as to continue with free collection would have resulted in the reduction of other services which the Council provided, such as leisure centres. Over 65% of Council's in the United Kingdom now charged for garden waste collection, and the garden waste collection charges required residents to 'opt in', and not all residents would choose to do this if they had no garden or limited outside space, or wished to dispose of their garden waste via composting, for example. Training would be provided to residents to help them understand how to effectively compost, and discounts would be offered on composters. With regard to wheeled bins, one of the key reasons for their use was to support the Council staff who walked miles every day and collected tonnes of waste. It was recognised that some people would find the wheeled bins difficult to use, however, there were those who also struggled with garden waste bags and the Council provided an assisted collection service free of charge to support residents in managing their waste. It was also possible for a number of residents to share the cost of a wheeled bin, and those residents who were in receipt of Local Council Tax Support would only have to pay the annual cost of the service, and not the joining cost. The Council had recognised the financial difficulties facing its residents, and had taken what steps it could to mitigate this.

Carinna Copper attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! Provisions. She wished to discuss the danger of

electric vehicles (EVs) and the response which she had received from Officers to questions she had asked in the past which referred her to Trading Standards. She considered that this response had been inadequate given the severity of the fire hazard posed by EVs. A record number of e-bike and e-scooter fires had been reported this year and the charity Electrical Safety First had estimated that a fully charged e-bike battery was capable of exploding with the same energy as 6 hand grenades. The Council had previously been given notice of neglect (at a previous meeting of the Panel) with respect to dangerously cluttering the streets with devices which were not only a trip hazard but also had well evidenced explosive fire risks. When would the Council address its now grossly negligent position? A Freedom of Information request had been submitted asking Officers to explain the exact parameters of the climate emergency. The group she represented was also awaiting the evidence the Council had used for its decision to declare a man-made climate emergency when neither the IPCC of the United Kingdom Government had declared one. The Council had not provided evidence based, unbiased decision making by looking at the available evidence. Officers had confirmed that this had not been done – when would it be? She considered that the Council's decision making was blinkered and non-evidence based, and that it was understandable that the Council may not have considered the environmental harms caused by the production of EVs and the dangers they presented, but now that the Council was aware, this continued and willful negligence was unacceptable. The Council had a duty to the public to be transparent and accountable, especially when public money was being spent. If the Council could not show evidence for decision making and spending, this was a misappropriation of public funds and misconduct in public office which could result in life imprisonment. The public would not stand for the Council ignoring them, and the Council's obligation was solely to the public. The public would take whatever action was necessary to ensure that the Council's decisions were serving all the public. It was necessary to have a public meeting, in the Town Hall, to discuss these matters fully, and the Panel was requested to provide a date for such a meeting.

A specific Council Officer had not been identified to her who would be accountable for taking the decisions she was querying in relation to EVs. It was not just her group who were saying that EVs were dangerous, public transport was banning them, and there was a difference between the dangers of combustion engines and EV fires and the hazard of EV fires was not being taken seriously. A recent tragedy in Cambridge had seen a family killed because of an e-bike battery. Colossal money was being spent on very questionable net zero initiatives and the public was requesting a debate on these issues in the Town Hall. It was felt that public consultation had been inadequate and the group didn't feel that it was being heard. A public debate was needed to allow the group to bring information to the table, and have an open debate with scientists who weren't paid by corporate interests.

The Chair of the Panel requested that Democratic Services Officers explore the possibility of the meeting which had been requested, and provide an update to her within 7 working days. Councillor Nissen asked Officers to investigate the comments which had been made within 7 working days, and report back to her on the subject.

In response to the point which had been raised in respect of an outstanding Freedom of Information (FOI) request, Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Project Officer, explained that he had responded to an FOI, but a further question had been submitted in respect of the response, which was outside the scope of the FOI. An additional FOI had been submitted which had not been specific enough for an answer to be provided to, and the resident who had submitted this request had been informed of this and invited to re-submit a more specific question. Simon Davison, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager, explained to the Panel that he had responded in detail to an email which had been sent to him, however, a further email which had been sent to him in respect of his response had not contained any questions which required to be addressed.

The Chair of the Panel noted the allegations which had been made in respect of misconduct in public office, and urged any member of the public to raise any such concerns directly with the Monitoring Officer of the Council, Andrew Weavers.

Alan Short attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! Provisions. He addressed the Committee in respect of the Council's Local Plan. It now seemed likely that the Middlewick Ranges would be sold and discussions were taking place between the developer, Planning Officers and Essex County Council. The conditions which permitted the inclusion of Middlewick in the Local Plan were extensive, and mentioned conditions which were needed to protect the environment, and further conditions which needed to be met by replacing the existing environment with similar things in other locations, and that these were to be paid for by the developer. Would the Environment and Sustainability Panel be monitoring those conditions during the drawing up of the plans, and ensuring that the conditions were met in any agreed development?

The Chair of the Panel explained the remit of the Environment and Sustainability Panel, and the fact that the Panel did not monitor the implementation of planning agreements. Andrew Tyrrell, Head of Public Protection, attended the meeting and advised Mr Short that all Planning Policies in the Local Plan set a benchmark that was a minimum expectation which would apply regardless of changes which may occur in developers or plans. It was hoped that this would provide Mr Short with some assurance that conditions which had been imposed would be met, however, if he wished to seek further assurance, then the Council's Local Plan Committee was the most appropriate place to do so. The Chair of the Panel noted the comments which had been made by Mr Short, and suggested that he attend the next Cabinet meeting which was on 7 October, to address Cabinet under the Council's Have Your Say! Provisions, as this was a meeting which she would also attend.

Kemal Cufoglu attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! Provisions. He represented Pesticide Free Essex, and had asked 5 questions of the Panel at its meeting in June 2023, including what incentives could be put in place to support residents who wished their streets to be pesticide free. Regrettably, Mr Cufoglu was very dissatisfied with the way that his enquiries had been dealt with by the Panel as he had not received any communication from it, and after a month he had contacted Officers who had been

present at the meeting to inform them that he had not received a response. In September 2023, he had received a response to an FOI request which he had raised, and which he considered was poor and contained statements which conflicted with the response which he had received from the Panel. Pesticide Free Essex would like to receive feedback from the Portfolio Holders of Neighborhood Services, Communities and Environment and Sustainability regarding the prospects of introducing hand weeding schemes. On behalf of Pesticide Free Essex and other activists who were concerned with the environmental and biodiversity crisis, he expressed his disappointment that the meeting of the Panel which had been scheduled for July had been cancelled, and he hoped that this would not happen again.

The Chair of the Panel addressed some of the concerns which Mr Cufoglu had raised, and pointed out that at the last meeting of the Panel he had agreed to send in a report he had prepared to Officers to facilitate future working, but this had not been forthcoming. It appeared that there had been a misunderstanding, and apologies were offered for this. The Head of Neighbourhood Services offered wholehearted support for the suggestions which had been made by Mr Cufoglu in relation to reducing pesticides. The Council had been introducing weeding into its 'Litter Warrior' scheme and details of this were available on the Litter Warrior website where it was also possible to obtain gloves and other weeding apparatus. If groups of residents wished to take wider action then they were advised to speak with their Ward Councillor who would be able to enlist help from Officers, who would provide any assistance that they were able to. The Head of Neighbourhood Services was aware that groups of residents had petitioned Essex County Council to stop the use of weedkiller in their street, and offered to manage weeds in the street themselves. Mr Cufoglu was invited to a face to face meeting with Officers to exchange ideas and discuss any concerns which he may have, a suggestion which Mr Cufoglu welcomed. The Chair of the Panel invited Mr Cufoglu to send any emails which he wished to her direct, in order that she could circulate these appropriately to Officers.

102. Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve Improvements

The Panel considered a report inviting it to recommend to Cabinet changes to Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve, subject to approval of the capital programme for which Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve is included.

Fiona Shipp, Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. The Panel heard that the Ferry Marsh Nature reserve was located next to the River Colne and Wivenhoe. It was an area of land that Colchester City Council (the Council) had taken control of in 1999 as a dry marsh area. Over time there had been a number of flooding events at the site, and the pipe which led from the site out to the river Colne had a tendency to become blocked by silt and frequently needed unblocking. The Environment Agency used to manage this area and had unblocked the pipe regularly, however, due to changes in the way the area was now managed the Council was now responsible for keeping the pipe clear of debris. It was noticed that

as the site had become wetter more species had made it their home, and in 2010 work had been undertaken with Essex Wildlife Trust to manage ditches in the area to try to improve the habitat of water voles there.

It was now proposed that the area was managed as a wetland marsh area by installing water control measures on the site to allow the water level to be regulated to maximise the benefit to the environment there. Additionally, the outlet pipe needed to be extended into the river to reduce the amount of silt which accumulated in it and increase the capacity to remove excess water from the area. As a consequence of the increased water on the site, it was proposed that the public path through the middle of the marsh be removed, although the path along the riverbank which connected with the Wivenhoe Trail would continue to be maintained. A further small path would be added from the Wivenhoe Trail to enable members of the public to access the marsh to benefit from the environment that had been created, and a bird screen would be erected there. It was considered that the Council was in a position to have a really positive impact on the site which was already a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Officers acknowledged that the proposals would have an effect on local people and visitors to the site, as access to the site would be altered. Because of this a consultation had been carried out, with 217 people attending drop-in sessions held locally, together with 170 responses to an online survey which had run for 6 weeks. Of those who responded, 70% were in favour of supporting the biodiversity of the site and modifying access to help achieve this, and 65% supported the implementation of further water control measures.

The Panel was asked to make a recommendation to Cabinet that the works be included in the Council's Capital Programme so that the pipe could be extended to enable management of the water levels on site. It was hoped that the other changes which were proposed in the Officer's report which was before the Panel would be able to be funded from the site budget over the next few years.

Jane Black attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! provisions. She stated that her views had been endorsed by the Committee of the Wivenhoe Society, and she considered that there were 2 main issues, which were public access and the correct water level. When the Council had acquired the site it had entered into a covenant which stated "the Council hereby covenants with the transferors for the benefit of the remainder of the retained land as follows: not to use the property otherwise than as public open space". For well over a decade the residents of the retained land and other people of lower Wivenhoe had greatly enjoyed walking across the marsh which was part of a round walk including the river wall. The marsh was the only space which was given as part of the housing development on the old port, and was one of only two places in Wivenhoe where a public path gave access to marshland. The Panel heard that the survey which had been carried out did not ask whether the public supported the closure of the path across Ferry Marsh, and it was considered that the proposed small loop was a poor substitute for the previous path across the marsh. It was accepted that people and dogs could disturb birds, but a compromise was needed, and it was suggested that the main path should be retained with the requirement that all dogs remained on lead in this area. A permanent repair of the sluice was required, and the maintenance of

water levels in the ditches was desirable, although there was concern that local roads would flood if the water level ever rose above the level of the ditches.

The Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager suggested that the provision of public open space did not require that the same paths were constantly maintained, and that the location of public access to the site had not been set. A circular walk around the site would still be available, and the intention was not to exclude people from the site, but rather to enhance it. As owners of the site, the Council was under an obligation to manage it as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and to try to improve it as far as possible. If the proposal was approved by Cabinet, then an expert would be engaged to consider the water levels in the marsh to ensure that these were at the correct level which would not cause any additional risk to the surrounding area.

Jane Black summarised her position by saying that she did not consider that the provisions of the covenant were satisfied by the provision of a small loop walk, and thought that insufficient access to the site was being provided.

Rob Neve attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! provisions. He had been a resident of Wivenhoe for 18 years, and for 14 of those years had enjoyed walking across the marsh. He considered that repairing the sluice was essential and urgent work, but that any additional expenditure on the site would be foolish and unnecessary. There were concerns that if the area was flooded completely then nearby railway track could be undermined, and Old Ferry Road had also flooded when the water levels in the marsh had been raised. The path through the middle of the marsh should be re-opened, and dogs required to be on leads if necessary, but other than the repair of the sluice, the area needed no other improvement.

The Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager explained that the proposals were intended to enhance the site, although it was accepted that not everyone would agree with the project. Mr Neve confirmed that he did not agree with the proposals, and a number of other people he was aware of did not agree either. He considered that the right questions were not asked in the Council survey, and asked that the Panel consider the budgetary implications of the proposed scheme in the light of the financial pressures the Council was facing.

A Panel member considered that a balance had to be struck between maintaining public access to the site in its current form, and enhancing biodiversity. The enhancing of the biodiversity and the modification of public access was an interesting way forward for the site and the proposal was a good one.

The Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager clarified to the Panel that the bird screen proposed would be a wooden screen which resembled the front of a bird hide and which would provide an opportunity for members of the public to go into the marsh and observe wildlife through the screen without disturbing it.

In discussion, the Panel expressed some concern about the covenant which had been mentioned. It considered that it was essential that the existence and exact terms of the covenant be confirmed to ensure that the Council's proposals were not

in breach of this. Consideration was given to recommending the scheme to Cabinet with the caveat that additional assurance was offered in respect of the covenant.

It was noted that the extension of the outlet pipe would cost in the region of £46,000 subject to the works being included within the Council's Capital Programme. There was some concern expressed about the budget implications of this additional pressure, given the Council's current financial position. It was explained to the Panel that the Environment Agency had stopped maintaining the pipe because a new flood barrage had been installed in the river Colne, and the work of the Agency had been reduced in the area as a result of this. The Panel determined that more detailed information on the cost of the works and possible sources of funding for this would be very useful to consider. The Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager confirmed that the proposals for which cost had not specifically been identified in the report were fairly low cost to implement and could be met out of the current site budget. A detailed survey would be required on the site and the cost of this was unknown at the present time.

The Panel recognised the concerns which had been raised by residents, and wondered whether any alternative arrangements for the site had been submitted for consultation. It was necessary to ensure that the proposals which had been put forward were not carried out to the detriment of other existing open spaces. It was clarified that there was no proposal being made at this time in respect of the Crown Estate land at the location, as no decision had been taken to take on this piece of land at the present time. Any such proposal would be the subject of public consultation in the future. The river wall did form part of the walk around the site and this was owned by the Council and would be maintained as part of the asset. There were no issues with anti-social behaviour in the area.

The panel note that a number of additional queries had been raised in respect of the project during the course of the debate, and indicated that it would be happy to receive an amended report at its next meeting providing more information on the points which had been raised. The Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager confirmed that such a delay in making any recommendation to Cabinet would have no significant implications for the site, however, the repair of the sluice gate and extension of the drainage pipe were the most urgent items of work to allow flooding on the site to be managed.

Following further discussions, the Panel considered that the most effective way forward was to recommend that the extension and repair work on the outlet pipe be put forward to Cabinet with the recommendation that this work be included in the Council's Capital Programme, and the remaining information which had been requested in relation to the site be resubmitted to the Panel at a time to be determined by Officers.

RECOMMENDED TO Cabinet that:

- Work to extend the outfall pipe leading from the sluice at Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve be included within Colchester City Council's Capital Programme.

RESOLVED that:

- A further report be presented to the Environment and Sustainability Panel containing additional detail in relation to:
 - o The covenant which was in place on the Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve, and whether or not the proposed works would be in breach of this
 - o Greater analysis of the cost elements of the proposal, and the source of the funding for these elements
 - o Additional clarifying information in relation to the surveys which had been carried out among local residents.

103. Woodland and Biodiversity Project Update

The Panel will considered a report that set out and reviewed the progress that had been made through the Woodland and Biodiversity Project which was now in year 5 of its five-year programme.

David Carter, Parks and Open Space Improvement Officer, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. The Panel heard that over the lifespan of the Project it had been expanded from its original focus of tree planting, and it now focussed on communities, wildlife and the environment, with key principles of not harming existing habitats, using natural processes, having a balance of the needs of people and nature and collaborating with local communities and partners. The Project had been nominated for awards, and in 2023, 425 volunteers had been involved in tree planting. The Council's grass cutting regime had been altered to enhance biodiversity, with the provision of long grass and flower areas. The preceding 4 years had been a learning curve for the Council and work had been carried out with a very wide range of partners across the community. Year 5 of the Project was focussing on continuing obtaining funding for trees, together with work on the Council's Cymbeline project which involved turning agricultural land into a nature reserve for wildlife and biodiversity through working with the tenant farmer. Although the Woodland and Biodiversity Project was in its final year, the Cymbeline project would be incorporated into the work of the Council over the next 3 or 4 years, and it was hoped that planting on the site would take place the following year.

Although the Woodland and Biodiversity Project was in its final year, it was considered to be a legacy project as it had changed the ways in which the Council approached and managed its open and green spaces, to improve biodiversity for the residents of Colchester.

In discussion, the Panel recognised the early years of the Project had been very target-driven, and noted that there had been some issues with tree planting in some areas. The Parks and Open Space Improvement Officer confirmed that additional control measures could be implemented when providing young trees for planting, to ensure that these trees had been planted and were being maintained in the correct areas. Suitable measures would be considered, and an update provided to the Panel in the future. It was confirmed that the Trees for Years project would continue in the future.

In response to questions from a Panel member, the Parks and Open Space Improvement Officer confirmed that a failure rate of 8% of trees planted had been recorded over the past year, which was lower than the expected failure rate of 10% to 20%. The Tree Guardian volunteers predominantly maintained areas where tree whips had been planted and would be provided with tree canes and guards, together with mallets and gloves, however, if further equipment was requested that this would be supported whenever possible. The Council's Countryside Team did provide bat boxes, and a list of events at which the team would be in attendance could be found on the Council's website. Within the Council's Cymbeline project, some areas had been earmarked for wetland improvements, and the importance of ponds and other wet areas was understood.

Archaeological works at Cymbeline meadows had found the foundation of brick kilns which dated to the Roman era, and which were probably used to produce bricks which had built Colchester. This did slightly affect the Council's plans for the site, and some tree planting would be relocated in order to prevent disturbance of the kiln site. The kilns would be interpreted on the site in an appropriate manner, which had yet to be determined.

In discussion the Panel noted the very positive report which reflected the changing public attitude towards environmental issues. It was encouraging to see the City Council taking a lead on projects such as this. The success of the Project was applauded, but how would the learning and experience which had arisen from it be utilised in the future to ensure that this was not lost, and the public could benefit from it as much as possible? The Parks and Open Space Improvement Officer assured the Panel that even though the Project was coming to an end, knowledge which had been gained from it was being applied throughout the Council's day to day management of the borough, and the Council's website provided lots of information for the public on various projects which were ongoing. The Cymbeline project would take several years to develop on site, and even though the Woodland and Biodiversity Project was coming to an end, there would always be a desire to carry forward different elements of this. The Neighbourhood Services Manager would consider what resources would be available for Councillors to help support their residents in ongoing projects, and advised the Panel that information would also be distributed via the Council's social media platforms and website, and through engagement with the Council's Greening team.

A Panel member noted that she had encountered a number of difficulties when attempting to secure small pieces of land for the local community to manage, was there an opportunity for the Council to consider such small plots of land? The Panel noted the requirement to be mindful of the cost of transferring land to community groups of residents, and considered that there was a balance to be struck between the costs of such a transfer and the cost of maintaining these open spaces. The Head of Neighbourhood Services would speak with Councillors after the meeting to provide some case studies of successful community management of green spaces.

The Parks and Open Space Improvement Officer advised the Panel that the Council was a member of Parks East, which was a group composed of all Regional Eastern

Authorities which met quarterly and which supported the sharing of projects and learning. Additionally, the Council had delivered a presentation to the Association of Public Service Excellence, and did receive requests from other local authorities for advice and assistance. A record of the wildflower areas was kept and this was shared with Essex County Council.

RESOLVED that: the contents of the report be noted.

104. Council Emissions 2022/223

The Panel considered a report detailing the Council's emissions for the 2022-23 financial year.

Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Project Officer, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel in its deliberations. The figure which was contained in the report was at present a draft figure, while the Council was still querying some energy consumption data for some Council buildings. The report set out the methodology for calculating emissions from Council operations, and how the Council accounted for those. The attention of the Panel was drawn to mis-reporting of some electricity calculations in previous financial years, which had led to an over-reporting of emissions associated with electricity consumption. This referred to the Council's Leisure World site, which drew electricity from 3 sources, solar panels at the site, the National Grid, and a combined heat and power unit (CHP) which was also located on the site, and which used gas to generate electricity. Electricity obtained from this unit was at a much cheaper rate than that procured from the National Grid, and heat was also produced as a by-product. It had been assumed in the past that the data provided from the Council's Utility Service Bureau had solely concerned electricity obtained from the National Grid, whereas some was being produced by the CHP, utilising gas which had already been accounted for in the emissions calculations, leading to double counting some emissions. The Panel was shown information illustrating that transmission and distribution losses associated with obtaining electricity from the National Grid were now accounted for as well, although this was not something that the Council was in direct control of. Once the 2022/2023 figures had been confirmed, a report on greenhouse gasses would be produced on the Council's website and all previous emissions data would be updated at this time.

The Council was in the process of writing a Carbon Management Plan, identifying measures to reduce emissions at several of the Council's buildings, and bids were to be made to 2 grant funds to support emission reduction. The Climate Emergency Project Officer would provide the Panel with breakdowns of the Council's emissions for each of its key buildings in the future.

A Panel member noted that a lot of the changes in these figures which had been presented were due to changes in the National Grid, how much of this change was attributable to what The Council was doing, and how much just to changes in the National Grid? The actual energy consumption of the Council needed to be produced each year to enable this to be monitored.

In response to questions from the Panel, Simon Davison, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager, confirmed that the combined heat and power gas fired turbine produced electricity and the waste heat which was generated was used to heat the pool at Leisure World, which was a very efficient use of power in that space, as well as delivering electricity at approximately one third the price of that obtained from the National Grid. The Council used the standardised format for determining its emissions, and although it utilised very few hybrid vehicles, consideration could be given to presenting the Panel with additional information on their emissions in the future. In terms of the transmission losses which had been mentioned, it was explained that the Council used the standardised report format for greenhouse gas reporting. As the Council contracted to purchase electricity from a supplier, part of this cost was attributable to transmission losses which were associated with this supply.

RESOLVED that: the contents of the report be noted.

105. Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

The Panel considered a report detailing key progress and updates from actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), and other relevant updates since its last meeting in June 2023.

Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Project Officer, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel in its deliberations.

A Panel member enquired how the CEAP was engaging with the Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC)? What was the scope for the team that worked at the ECAC to work with the Community Enabling team on retrofitting and other assistance for residents of Colchester?

The Climate Emergency Project Officer explained that the ECAC carried out a significant amount of good work, but improvements could be made how this was disseminated to other local authorities in the area. The Council had an Energy Efficiency Improvement Co-ordinator who had managed to open up opportunities for retrofitting for residents who met certain criteria. This Officer also arranged pop up and drop in sessions to offer advice and support in relation to energy usage, and information on this topic would soon be available the Council's website, together with information about grant funding which was available.

A Panel member enquired about the '100 Bikes' scheme in Greenstead, how was the Council monitoring the success of this to ensure that the bikes were being used? The Climate Emergency Project Officer, would make enquiries, but considered that monitoring would be in place as the project had been grant funded.

RESOLVED that: the contents of the report be noted.

106. Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft work programme for 2023-24.

The Panel agreed that a further report concerning Ferry marsh would be brought back to it at a time which was considered suitable by Officers.

An update on the work of the Essex Climate Action Commission was requested, with the timeframe for this to be determined by Officers.

It was noted that it had been 3 years since the Council had resolved to stop using glyphosate herbicide, and once sufficient data had been gathered about the impact that this decision had made, an update would be provided to the Panel.

RESOLVED that:

- the contents of the work programme be noted.