

8 February 2024

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Sustainability</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Ben Plummer</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Climate Emergency Action Plan Update</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>		

**1. Executive Summary**

1.1 This report details key progress and updates from actions in the [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) (CEAP), and other relevant updates since the last meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

1.2 Key highlights include:

- The Council has begun participating in a programme to understand ways it can adapt the Events Policy and provide assessment tools for event promoters to help improve the sustainability of outdoor events that take place in Colchester.
- The Solar Together scheme has opened, enabling residents to apply to get solar panels and/or battery storage systems at a cheaper price through a collective bulk buying scheme.
- Supporting launch of the Bikewise scheme through the Safer Colchester Partnership to promote the secure locking of bikes.
- The Council is conducting research on opportunities to offset residual emissions left after action is taken to reduce emissions from its estate. The Council is interested in hearing from organisations that may have projects that could help save carbon emissions, but are struggling to access suitable grant funding to launch them as certain offsetting models may be able to assist.
- The Council will be taking part in a government pilot project to understand and report on climate risks and impacts that Council services may be affected by, and to establish actions that can be taken to respond to these risks.
- Improvements have been made in air quality in Colchester, leading to two air quality management areas being proposed for removal.
- Continued availability of [free adult cycle training](#) of varying levels from beginner to advanced level training, to improve cycling confidence and understanding of how to cycle safely.

**2. Recommended Decision**

2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the report and ask any questions they have about the updates provided or progress of any actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

**3. Reason for Recommended Decision**

3.1 To note the progress made to date and feedback on ongoing work.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

4.1 Not applicable.

## 5. Background Information

### Key updates

#### Green Events Code

- 5.1 Colchester City Council, alongside Maldon District Council and 10 other local authorities across England are participating in a programme that is looking to understand and overcome the barriers associated with making outdoor events more environmentally friendly. The programme co-ordinated by [Vision 2025](#), a group of outdoor events sustainability professionals, will provide support to each Council to help improve their Events policies and introduce methods for helping event organisers understand the environmental impact of events they are putting on, and encouraging improvements. More information about the project can be found [here](#).

#### Solar Together

- 5.2 Solar Together is a scheme whereby residents can get solar panels and/or battery storage for their property at a discounted price. The scheme works by collecting a bulk group of residents who express an interest in having solar panels installed on their property and using this to demonstrate demand to installers. Installers then bid to deliver the solar panel installation works in a 'reverse auction' (i.e. they try to outbid each other to deliver works at the cheapest price). Residents can then get better value for money for their installation than if they were to pay on their own. Residents can express an interest in applying to the scheme by visiting <https://solartogether.co.uk/essex/home>.

#### Carbon saving project case studies

- 5.3 Alongside reducing greenhouse gas emissions from its own estate, the Council is looking at options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions through investing in offsetting projects. The Council is aware that there will be residual emissions from the estate and its operations that cannot be fully decarbonised for technical and financial reasons and is therefore considering offset routes to meet the 2030 carbon neutral target. The Council is interested in hearing of any local carbon saving projects being developed by the community that could benefit from funding. The Council is researching a funding mechanism for these projects called [Area Based Insetting](#), which may enable funding to be made available from a variety of organisations to enable carbon saving projects to go ahead, in return for the organisations claiming carbon savings or corporate social responsibility (CSR) benefits to report. If councillors are aware of any projects, or community groups that may have suitable project ideas, then please contact [climate.change@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:climate.change@colchester.gov.uk) for a project form.

#### Bikewise campaign

- 5.4 Safer Colchester Partnership have relaunched the 'Bikewise' campaign that aims to raise awareness of ways to securely lock bikes. Police have supported the campaign by 'tagging' bikes with information indicating how well they have been locked up and ways to improve this. The Secure Bike Park has also had an offer in January for use of the facility for £1 for the whole of January (rather than £1 per day, the standard rate), along with Colchester Bike Kitchen providing free bike marking and registration which enables stolen bikes to be returned to their owners if recovered by the police. See more information on the campaign [here](#).

## **Climate Adaptation reporting pilot**

- 5.5 The Council has been invited to participate in a government pilot project, testing how local authorities can report on climate change risks and impacts, along with actions being taken to combat these. This will inform the Climate Change Committee's independent advice provided to government as part of the UK's Climate Change Risk Assessment. This is the first time that local authorities have been invited to participate in climate adaptation reporting, many organisations including those in the energy, water, transport and financial sectors amongst others. Participating in this pilot will help the Council understand the climate risks to its services and raise its importance in decision making where relevant.

## **Air Quality Management Area improvements**

- 5.6 As reported in the Council's 2023 [Air Quality Annual Status Report](#), air quality in Colchester has been improving, leading to two of the remaining three air quality management areas being proposed for removal. The areas, East Street and Ipswich Road, and Lucy Lane North, Stanway have been found to be in compliance with allowed concentrations of air pollutants. The remaining air quality management area covering many city centre streets is proposed to be amended so that it includes Brook Street and junction with East Street and East Hill, Osborne Street, St John's Street and Mersea Road. A comprehensive report on action the Council has taken to attempt to support improvements in air quality will be presented at the next Environment and Sustainability Panel meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

## **Free Adult Cycle Training**

- 5.7 Essex County Council are continuing to provide access to [free adult cycle training](#), to improve cycling confidence. These 1:1 sessions range from the 'adult learn to ride' sessions for adults at a beginner riding level to 'adult advanced cycling' which gives users advice on road positioning, cycling on faster roads and at junctions and roundabouts. Completing the 'adult advanced cycling' training is a condition of being able to use the pay as you go electric bike and electric cargo bikes in the secure bike hub, as well as for staff to use any of the Council's electric and electric cargo bikes. Find out [more information](#), including the [registration form for sessions here](#).

## **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 2023-2026 theme of 'Respond to the climate emergency'.

## **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 direct financial implications of the updates provided in this report.

## **11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications**

11.1 Providing more facilities, and access to training, to support cycling will help encourage more residents to cycle more which can benefit physical and mental health.

11.2 There are no anticipated impacts on community safety from the project updates presented in this report.

## **12. Health and Safety Implications**

12.1 There are no health and safety implications from this report.

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

13.1 There are no risk management implications from this update.

## **14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

14.1 The project updates in this report all aim to reduce emissions and environmental impacts across the Council.