



# Environment and Sustainability Panel Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,  
Colchester, CO1 1PJ**

**Thursday, 21 September 2023 at 18:00**

**The Environment and Sustainability Panel** explores methods of conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity through adapting existing practices or creating new ecologically diverse environments. The Panel encourages renewable energy generation and carbon footprint reduction in both the public and private sectors by examining air and water quality, plastic and waste reduction and renewable energy generation. The Panel monitors

the progress and implementation of the Council's Emergency Climate Action Plan and regularly reports to Cabinet and Full Council.

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## **Environment and Sustainability Panel - Terms of Reference (but not limited to)**

1. To acknowledge our “Climate Emergency” and translate aspirations into actions.
2. To explore methods of conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity, whether through adapting existing practices and places or creating new ecologically diverse environments with sustainable practices built in.
3. To engage, communicate and collaborate with strategic partners, external bodies, Parish Councils and local communities, to encourage biodiversity enhancement and sustainable practices through their work.
4. To encourage environmental stewardship focusing on carbon footprint reduction by improving air quality, water quality, plastic and waste reduction and renewable energy generation in both public and private spheres across the City.
5. To be a leading voice for environmental sustainability, promoting innovative environmental practices, having influence across the City and beyond, including public and private sector policy, at regional and national levels.
6. To promote, monitor and regularly report to Cabinet and Full Council upon progress and implementation of the Council’s Climate Emergency Action Plan and it’s goal to be net carbon neutral by 2030.

**COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL**  
**Environment and Sustainability Panel**  
**Thursday, 21 September 2023 at 18:00**

**The Environment and Sustainability Panel Members are:**

Councillor Steph Nissen	Chairman
Councillor Tracey Arnold	Deputy Chairman
Councillor Molly Bloomfield	
Councillor Pam Cox	
Councillor Paul Dundas	
Councillor Andrew Ellis	
Councillor Mark Goacher	
Councillor Sue Lissimore	
Councillor Venessa Moffat	
Councillor Natalie Sommers	

**The Environment and Sustainability Panel Substitute Members are:**

All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members or members of this Panel.

**AGENDA**  
**THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING**  
**(Part A - open to the public)**

Please note that Agenda items 1 to 6 are normally dealt with briefly.

**Live Broadcast**

Please follow this link to watch the meeting live on YouTube:

[\(107\) ColchesterCBC - YouTube](#)

**1 Welcome and Announcements**

The Chair will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chair will invite all Councillors and Officers participating in the meeting to introduce themselves.

**2 Substitutions**

Councillors will be asked to say if they are attending on behalf of a Committee member who is absent.

**3 Urgent Items**

The Chair will announce if there is any item not on the published agenda which will be considered because it is urgent and will explain the reason for the urgency.

**4 Declarations of Interest**

Councillors will be asked to say if there are any items on the agenda about which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest which would prevent them from participating in any discussion of the item or participating in any vote upon the item, or any other registerable interest or non-registerable interest.

**5 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Panel will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023 are a correct record.

**Environment and Sustainability Panel draft minutes 22 June 2023** 7 - 16

**6 Have Your Say!**

Members of the public may make representations to the meeting. Each representation may be no longer than three minutes (500 words). Members of the public may register their wish to address the meeting remotely by e-mailing [democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk) by 12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting date. In addition a written copy of the representation will need to be supplied for use in the event of unforeseen technical difficulties preventing participation at the meeting itself.

There is no requirement to pre-register for those attending in person.

**7 Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve Improvements** 17 - 26

The Panel will consider 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.

**8 Woodland and Biodiversity Project Update** 27 - 38

The Panel will consider a report that sets out and reviews the progress that has been made through the Woodland and Biodiversity Project which is now in year 5 of its five-year programme.

9 **Colchester City Council Emissions - draft figures for Financial Year 2022-23** 39 - 46

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

10 **Climate Emergency Action Plan Update** 47 - 52

The Panel will consider a report which details key progress and updates from actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), and other relevant updates since the last meeting on 22nd June 2023.

11 **Environment and Sustainability Panel Work Programme 2023-24** 53 - 56

The Panel will consider a report which sets out the current work programme for the Panel for the 2023-24 municipal year,

12 **Exclusion of the Public (not Scrutiny or Executive)**

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

**Part B**  
**(not open to the public including the press)**

## Environment and Sustainability Panel

22 June 2023

**Present:** Councillor Steph Nissen (Chair)  
Councillor Tracey Arnold (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor Molly Bloomfield  
Councillor Pam Cox  
Councillor Paul Dundas  
Councillor Sue Lissimore  
Councillor Venessa Moffat  
Councillor Natalie Sommers

**Substitutes:** Councillor Darius Laws for Councillor Andrew Ellis  
Councillor Richard Kirkby-Taylor for Councillor Goacher

**Also present:**

### 94. Welcome and announcements

In light of the fact that the Panel was comprised of some new members, Councillor Nissen, in her role as Chair of the Panel, reminded all present of the Terms of Reference of the Panel.

### 95. Minutes of the previous meeting

*RESOLVED* that: the minutes of the meetings of 21 March 2023 and 24 May 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

### 96. Have Your Say!

Alderman Peter Chillingworth attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! provisions. He reminded the Panel of the Colne Valley Countryside Project (CVCP) which had been jointly run by Colchester Borough Council and Braintree District Council. This project had ceased in 2010 due to a lack of funding. The CVCP used to work with the public on projects promoting access to the countryside, supporting wildlife and other environmental projects. The Council was working on projects which would impact the lower reaches of the Colne, but would not affect the upper reaches, which included a large number of parishes across a very large area. Alderman Chillingworth felt that the time was right to restart the CVCP as a group led by volunteers for 2 reasons:

1. The governments' payment to farmers was now based on environmental works and not production. A great deal of advice and coordination would be needed to ensure that this funding was not wasted, and the actions of individual farmers would benefit the environment as a whole.
2. The public were aware of the environment and were eager to become involved in schemes of this nature.

In the absence of proposals from the Council, Alderman Chillingworth was proposing to establish a community-lead group staffed by volunteers, called the Colne Valley Countryside Group. He sought support from the Panel, and the Council. If enough support was received, he would put the proposal to Parish Councils and set up a public meeting to gauge interest. He envisaged a local co-ordinator who would organise the expertise of local people and environmental organisations. Such a group would need little finance of its own but would be able to take advantage of grant funding and local projects. Would the Panel support this idea and put it forward for consideration by Cabinet and Senior Officer?

Andrew Tyrrell, Head of Public Protection, advised the Panel that the Council had been considering its Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy. The development of this Strategy had been informed by wider areas, and had included the creation of farm clusters to work with local farmers in supporting the whole ecosystem of the river network. The Council was keen to work in partnership with other bodies across administrative boundaries. Officers would consider Alderman Chillingworth's proposal and refer the matter back to the Panel at an appropriate time to consider whether to make a recommendation to Cabinet.

Rachel Mathews attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! provisions. She had been a keen environmentalist and supporter of green energy for some years, and her office was powered by solar energy. She had been mortified to find that the production of lithium generated a huge amount of waste each year including sulfuric acid and uranium, and the mining of cobalt was carried out at a great human cost. An Ethical Consumer Organisation report had stated that it was hard to avoid forced labour in the solar panel supply chain. The Panel heard that wind turbines lasted about 20 years, and required a huge amount of resources and energy to both manufacture and maintain, including the requirement for diesel starter engines and gallons of lubricating oil. Both wind turbine and solar panels were extremely difficult to recycle, costing more than the production of the items themselves. She considered that these so-called green or ethical solutions were not solutions at all, but simply represented good marketing by the \$1.5 trillion a year climate change industry. Future environmental damage should be limited by avoiding the use of unnecessary electric vehicles (EVs) and acres of solar farms occupying farmland.

The Panel heard that there was currently no definition of what constituted a 'green' offering, and current proposed solutions were not better than current energy solutions, and in many regards were much worse. Knowing the true cost of so-called green technologies, she could not support the Council as it embarked on faux-green endeavours. She had made the Council aware of the human cost of cobalt mining at the last Panel meeting, and considered that to continue to support any form of slavery through spending public money was negligent. Many of the well-intentioned



projects which the council was pursuing were harmful, and she considered that it was necessary for all such projects to be immediately halted while a detailed investigation was carried out, in accordance with the Council's own Code of Conduct which specifically required that Council resources were not mis-used.

The Council was obligated to always seek the best available knowledge, and that should it transpire that any Council policy, no matter how well intentioned, should prove to be harmful, then the Council was obligated to stop following this policy.

Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Project Officer, advised the Panel that when considering projects, Officers did carry out research and try to consider what was in the best interest of people and the environment. It had to be acknowledged that everything had some kind of environmental impact, and the Council was considering the most appropriate use of available technologies.

The Head of Public Protection confirmed that the Council was always open to considering new evidence and adapting its strategies and policies accordingly if appropriate.

In response to Officers, Rachel Mathews considered that investing in the current sub-standard technology would ultimately be a waste of money, and any investment should be held off until genuine solutions were identified. She further considered that the Council was investing in slavery which was unacceptable. She noted that the Council had not provided a definition of what a climate emergency was, and was not therefore in a position to know what it had ended. The climate emergency needed to be properly defined, and any policy decisions which were taken in reliance on the declaration of a climate emergency needed to be properly evidenced.

The Chair of the Panel confirmed that a full written response to the questions which Ms Mathews had raised would be provided by Officers within a week.

Karina Cooper attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! provisions. On 6 June, she had asked the Council's Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise why the Environment and Sustainability Panel were continuing with environmentally harmful plans. Why was the Council ignoring documented safety concerns with regard to EVs, and would the Council confirm that associated serious fire safety concerns were not valid? Had Essex Fire Service been consulted by the Council in relation to the toxic runoff from EV fires? The name of a specific Council Officer who would be responsible for compromising public safety was requested. The dangers of EVs had been highlighted and it was considered that if the Council continued to act negligently then liability would rest with the Council as well as individuals. A public forum had been requested, and the Council was called upon to support the climate data it was relying on, together with a claim of a man-made climate emergency.

Few people were aware of the full extent of the net zero plans and had not read the Absolute Zero and IPCC reports. These reports contained recommendations which would have a significant impact on people's daily lives such as the closure of all United Kingdom airports by 2050, a 50% reduction in beef and lamb production by 2030 and the phasing out of fossil fuels by 2050. If people's way of life and freedoms

were to be compromised, then it was essential to prove conclusively that this was necessary. Full chart data had to be considered, including ice core sample data which showed CO2 levels much higher than they were now with much higher global temperatures and no detriment to the planet.

Ms Cooper advised the Panel that she was not a climate change denier, and confirmed that climate change did exist, however considered that the onus was on the Council to prove that climate change was man made. Phasing out petrol and diesel would restrict people's freedom to travel, and the Council was asked to confirm the constitutional basis on which it, or central government, was able to act in these respects.

The Panel were advised that a Public Accounts Committee report released recently stated that in the 2 years before Boris Johnson had become Prime Minister there had been £5.5 billion in fraud and waste from government, and in the 2 years following Boris Johnson becoming Prime Minister, this figure had escalated to £21 billion in fraud. It was the job of the electorate to hold government and local authorities to account, and Council Tax payers needed to be happy with the service they were receiving.

The Chair of the Panel confirmed that a full written response to the questions which Ms Cooper had raised would be provided by Officers within 7 working days.

Kemal Cufoglu attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! provisions. He was representing the group Pesticide Free Essex (PFE) and the residents of Colchester who had raised concerns about the frequent and dangerous use of pesticides in the streets. In February 2022, PFE had been informed that the Council would work with Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) and the Council's contractor, idverde, to monitor the effect of the new approach being taken by the Council in relation to weed control, and to identify any improvements which may be needed. An alternative herbicide was to be trialled in a specific car park from the beginning of March 2022. In June 2022, PFE had been informed that there had been no increase in complaints or enquiries received via the customer contact team at the Council, implying that the response had been positive. PFE, was however, concerned and asked the Panel the following questions:

1. Without any increase in concerns from residents, why did the City Council move from trialling a non-glyphosate herbicide in a single car park to all hard surfaces across the city?
2. How much money is being spent on Katoun Gold?
3. During which months, at what time of the day and how often is Katoun Gold applied?
4. Was the Panel aware that Katoun Gold's own guidance report explicitly highlights that it is a risk to non-targeted insects and butterflies, and has a moderate risk to earthworms? In 2018 Essex had been identified as a key location for insect habitat management – was the Panel aware of the risk that Katoun Gold posed at this crucial time for biodiversity?
5. On behalf of PFE, he asked whether the Council would make a simple change to its glyphosate ban and expand this to all toxic pesticides to boost the biodiversity of the city.

A Panel member expressed surprise that the Council had not experienced a rise in complaints about weeds, as she had received more complaints on this subject, did Mr Cufoglu have a list of herbicides which he believed did not have a detrimental effect on the environment? Mr Cufoglu confirmed that in 2019 PFE had provided a report to the Council which listed 6 alternatives to glyphosate herbicides, and PFE was more than happy to mobilise its volunteers to carry out hand weeding across the city, but would welcome any support from the Council such as providing simple gadgets to assist, or recognising residents who had contributed. The Panel requested that Mr Cufoglu re-send the PFE report to Officers who would be happy to consider this and then provide a full written response to the questions which had been raised.

Sandy Armitage attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! provisions. On 16 May 2023, she had learned via a friend's Facebook page that the pathway weeds in New Town had been sprayed with glyphosate. She, and many others, were horrified to learn of this and the herbicide had been sprayed by an operative on a scooter who was wearing no facemask on a windy day. She had learned that Essex County Council (ECC) was responsible for a lot of the pavements and paths in Colchester and that the preferred weedkiller used by this organisation was glyphosate. She did not understand the need to remove the wildflowers at all at this time, which did no harm and plenty of good. The harms of glyphosate were well known, including its effect as a carcinogen and its deadly effects on vital insects such as bees, and it was suggested that in residential areas the responsibility for keeping streets free of weeds should be returned to the residents. Street weeding days had happened in the past in her street which did not require weed killer. Could such days not be introduced widely for the benefit of all, removing the control of weeds from ECC's and the Council's remit altogether? Could the Council or ECC offer any support or general advice to a community based, non-chemical using weed removal programme?

A Panel member had been made aware of this issue as it had occurred in her ward, and she had sent several emails to ECC on the subject. A recent response had been received from ECC, and this would be shared with Ms Armitage.

Mr Etti attended the meeting and addressed the Panel in accordance with the Council's Have Your Say! provisions. Mr Etti advised the Panel that he did not wish to be present at the meeting, and would rather be spending time with friends and family. However, over the past few years, he considered that there had been a reduction in transparency between government, Councils and residents, and asked in what order these 3 sets of people should be placed?

In discussion, the Panel considered whether the question which had been posed was within its remit, and suggested that a response from a different area of the Council such as Scrutiny Panel or Cabinet may be more suitable.

## **97. Introduction and Overview of work on Environment and Sustainability**

The Panel considered a report introducing the Council's work on tackling the climate emergency and promoting sustainability and outlines upcoming priorities for the year.

Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Project Officer attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. The report before the Panel detailed the Council's progress on reducing its carbon emissions and listed highlights from the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan. The panel was asked to note the report, and questions on its contents were invited.

A Panel member noted that emissions from Council buildings were referenced in the report, but the fact that the Council owned over 6,000 dwellings was not mentioned. Surely the largest volume of emissions came from these dwellings, suggesting a lack of consistency in how the Council presented emission data from its sites. It was suggested that a reduction in emissions from Leisure World would pale in comparison to the emissions from the Council's housing stock. Although projects such as the proposed solar farm and heat network in the Northern Gateway development were listed as highlights in the report, the progress on these projects was questioned, and it was suggested that the report should be clear whether it was considered that referenced projects were, in fact, deliverable by the Council.

The Climate Emergency Project Officer accepted that the Council's housing stock did contribute significantly to emission data, however, this had been accounted for within the Council's emissions targets by recording energy consumption within the communal areas of these buildings. The Council paid for this consumption and this therefore counted as part of the Council's carbon footprint. The rest of the emissions from the dwellings themselves weren't within the Council's carbon footprint in accordance with greenhouse gas reporting protocols. An item on housing and sustainability would be brought to the panel in the future as part of the work programme. Andrew Tyrrell, Head of Public Protection, advised the Panel that the heat network was ready to be built as a standalone project, and had been ready for some time. Borehole testing had confirmed that the project generated the heat and water flows which were required, but if the network were to be constructed now, it would sit idle until associated housing was also completed. Progress on this element of the development was, however, expected this year. With regard to the proposed solar park, planning applications were expected to be submitted in the summer, and it had been demonstrated that the site was viable for a solar park which could assist the Council with offsetting. The project would then be carefully reviewed to ensure that it remained financially viable.

A Panel member noted that they had received multiple complaints from residents about the mowing of areas of grassland which had taken place during 'No Mow May', and the Council had received emailed complaints in regard to this. They wondered whether consideration had been given to the installation of solar panels above car parking spaces, which had been successfully carried out in France. The Head of Public Protection confirmed that this proposal had been considered in the past at specific car parks which unfortunately had not proved to be viable. However, costs and financial viability of these schemes changed over time, and they could be reconsidered in the future.

In discussion, the Panel acknowledged the concerns which had been raised during the course of the meeting by members of the public, and considered that there was merit in having a greater understanding of the supply chains involved in the provision

of green technology. The Council needed to be wary of unintended consequences on the landscape or tourist industry when utilising green technology. The Head of Public Protection confirmed to the Panel that social value was considered as part of the Council's procurement process, which included lifetime carbon emissions including transport but further work may be helpful on this subject in the future.

In response to an enquiry from a Panel member concerning the disposal of boiler equipment which had been removed from Rowan House, the Head of Public Protection confirmed to the Panel that the boilers had been identified as being at the end of their life before the recent refurbishment had taken place, and had in fact broken down during the first winter of the recent lockdown. Funding had already been secured to replace the boilers, and the move to air source heat pumps was entirely appropriate at this time. Additionally, furniture was saved from Rowan House and recycled via a local charity.

A Panel member requested further details of the steps which had been taken to improve energy efficiency in homes in Colchester, and the Climate Emergency Project Officer confirmed that approximately £500,000 of grant funding for increasing energy efficiency had been received over the past 2 years. The funding had mostly been spend on measures such as installing solar panels and insulation in properties, and the Council was looking to work with Community Energy Colchester in the future. A further funding bid had been successful to allow the Council to work with homes which were off the gas grid to improve their energy efficiency, particularly for those on low incomes. When further information was available on this project, it would be circulated to all Councillors.

The Climate Emergency Project Officer confirmed to the Panel that when a new strategy was being developed by the Council, every effort was taken to tie this in to environmental issues or concerns. Comparative data with other local authorities in relation to on air quality was expected to be available shortly.

A Panel member expressed concern that they had not been aware of a local organisation called Market Field Grows who were involved with tree planting, and considered that communications from the Council should be improved to make Councillors more aware of worthy local projects. With regard to tree planting, the last 2 summers had been very dry, and it was suggested that in place of trees, other plants could be offered to residents to plant, which were more drought resistant. The Climate Emergency Project Officer confirmed that the Council had been considering planting trees and other greenery which was more drought resistant or adapted to growing in drier climates, but further information could be provided by the Head of Neighbourhood Services.

In discussion, the Panel was pleased to note that the introduction of goats into the Highwoods Country Park, and wondered whether there were plans to introduce these into other green areas within the city. The use of solar bins in Dedham was noted, and the possibility of introducing these to Colchester City centre was raised to combat overflowing bins. The Climate Emergency Project Officer believed that the goats had been introduced into Highwoods as a trial specifically to graze on the scrub which was there, and other Officers may be better placed to address the question of whether further introductions were planned into different environments.

The possibility of introducing solar bins would require funding, and may be something which was picked up during the development of the Council's new Waste and Recycling Strategy.

The Panel considered that there may be issues in using car parks for the installation of solar panels due to the additional infrastructure that would be required, and noted that the price of electricity fluctuated, which could cause issues with actually generating profits during peak demand times. It was suggested that the Council could consider taking advantage of environmental corporate social responsibility to fund the provision of solar panels on private car parking sites? Simon Davison, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager, considered that this suggestion could be a viable option, and alternative funding streams were being considered by Officers.

Whole life cycle analysis was a developing science, however, some excellent accreditations existed in this area, and he could provide some more detailed information to the Panel and Officers on this subject. In relation to a previous discussion, he considered that retrofitting the Council's housing stock would be extremely expensive and would need to be subject to a cost benefit analysis. The importance of addressing the necessity of de-carbonising could not be understated, and it was essential to achieve the largest emission savings that were possible relative to cost.

*RESOLVED* that: Colchester City Council's progress on issues of environment and sustainability be noted.

## **98. 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 on 21 March 2023.

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

The Panel noted that a data centre had been used elsewhere in the United Kingdom to help with heating a swimming pool, could this be something which the Council would consider? Officers had already been considering this approach and would provide an update to the Panel in due course.

*RESOLVED* that: the contents of the report be noted.

## **99. Work Programme**

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

A panel member wished to see on all Council Committee reports a standard item requiring that the sourcing and recycling of any product which was the subject of the report be considered. The Panel did note that whole life cycle analysis was a huge topic, and it would not be practical to require a full analysis as part of every report, but it considered that a suitable summary may be appropriate. It was considered that Committees needed to have as full a picture as possible of all the implications when making a decision, including, for example, the composition of any batteries related to the purchase and whether they contained cobalt or lithium. There was a need to double check the environmental credentials of Council purchases to ensure that reasoned decisions were made.

In light of the discussions which had taken place throughout the meeting, Andrew Tyrrell, Head of Public Protection, considered that it would be appropriate to add an item to the work programme of the Panel at a suitable time which considered life cycle analysis, embodied carbon and end of life disposal. In relation to large capital projects, the Council already had a sustainability checklist which considered environmental impacts, however, this process could be presented to the Panel with examples from the Council's diverse activities, including the procurement process. The Panel would then be in a position to make a recommendation to Cabinet if it considered that there was a need to amend report templates.

*RESOLVED* that:

- the contents of the work programme be noted.
- An item containing an overview of the Council's procurement process and life cycle analysis to be added to the Panel's work programme for a future meeting.







## Environment and Sustainability Panel

Item

7

21<sup>st</sup> September 2023

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Sustainability</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Rosa Tanfield and Nicola Downs</b>
<b>Title</b>	Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve improvements		
<b>Wards affected</b>	Wivenhoe		

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve in Wivenhoe is managed by the Council's Countryside Team and in recent years, there has been a change of habitat with a significant increase in biodiversity due to the site having wetter conditions and reduced human access. As responsible landowners of the site, in the context of the Climate Emergency, and following public consultation, agreement is sought to protect the increase in biodiversity as a result of these changes.
- 1.2 In partnership with Natural England, Essex Wildlife Trust and Wivenhoe Town Council, the Council would like to introduce a system to control the water levels to an acceptable level that encourages the new wildlife to flourish, whilst minimizing the disruption to existing wildlife and still enabling the Rangers and Volunteers to maintain the site as per the management plan. This will help protect the biodiversity to continue to flourish at this site.

### 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To recommend to Cabinet that it approve of the changes to Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve as set out in the report, subject to approval of the capital programme for which Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve is included.

### 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To control the water levels to an acceptable level that encourages the new wildlife to flourish, whilst minimizing the disruption to existing wildlife and still enabling the Rangers and volunteers to maintain the site as per the management plan. This is aligned to feedback received from public consultation and supports objectives set out in the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and in its Strategic Plan.

### 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 If no action is taken, the site and adjacent Wivenhoe Trail will be subject to uncontrolled flooding. To prevent flooding the Sluice would need to be unblocked regularly at the Council's expense. Each time the sluice is unblocked it leads to a sudden water loss which means aquatic life is also lost suddenly. The Site of Special Scientific Interest status is unlikely to ever be in 'favourable' condition as a result.
- 4.2 If work is carried out to fix the sluice but no further work is carried out to manage water levels, then we will not be able to maintain optimal water level for biodiversity, and

benefits gained during recent flooding may be permanently lost. It will not be possible to fully deliver the sites management plan which recommends wetness of the site maintained for marsh and ditch assemblages. It may also not be possible to improve the Site of Special Scientific Interest condition to 'favourable'. If access is reinstated to the closed path, then disturbance by people and dogs will increase, which is likely to affect sensitive bird life. More dogs accessing the water is likely to affect water quality and invertebrate life because of the effects of flea medications on dogs.

## **5. Background Information**

- 5.1 Ferry Marsh (part of Colne Local Nature Reserve) in Wivenhoe is managed by the Council's Countryside Team and in recent years, there has been a change of habitat with a significant increase in biodiversity due to the site having wetter conditions and reduced human access.
- 5.2 In light of the current climate and biodiversity emergency faced by Colchester, the Council have been encouraged by the increase in biodiversity at this site, and as responsible landowners would seek to protect this.
- 5.3 In 1999, Colchester Borough Council took over the management of Ferry Marsh which is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI) These designations both place priority on the wildlife of the site and although managed by the Countryside Team, the site has never been designated a 'Country Park' where human activities should have greater priority.
- 5.4 From 2002 – 2017, the site largely remained a dry marsh gradually improving in quality due to the management by CBC, especially after 2010 when a section was placed off limits to people and dogs by the creation of ditch habitats for Water Voles under the guidance of Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT).
- 5.5 During this drier period however there is evidence that the site was becoming wetter with the Environment Agency unblocking the sluice three times during flooding events. Evidence from notes in previous management plans indicates that there had at times been limited access to the site due to its wet nature. There were resulting changes in the wildlife: Water Voles increased; Sea Barley arrived bringing another 'yellow' Nationally Scarce plant into the site.
- 5.6 In 2018, the sluice onsite blocked, water levels started to rise and access across the marsh was restricted by flooding. The sluice was no longer the original Environment Agency (EA) installed sluice, but a replacement installed by a developer that had now liquidated. The EA no longer unblocked the sluice, which thus remained blocked.
- 5.7 In 2020, the higher levels of water had greatly enlarged the areas of reedbed and by 2022 this had started to be broken up by natural pools forming in the centre, ideal for wildlife especially birds. In the summer of 2020, 40 pairs of Reed Warblers were spotted, 2 pairs of Reed Buntings, new species including 5 singing Cetti's Warbler, 4 pairs of Little Grebes together with Cuckoos. (Dr. Chris Gibson 2020 - bird survey records)
- 5.8 In 2022, all the Nationally Scarce qualifying plants still remain, and further species have also been discovered such as Divided Sedge. The other components of the Site of Special Scientific Interest are changing too, with Barrier Marsh having a thriving population of National Scarce Mousetail. The Outfall was cleared resulting in a significant change to the biodiversity on site which had built up over the years. Breeding bird numbers dropped instantly as the habitat changed and disturbance and predation factors such as foxes, dogs and cats moved in.

- 5.9 Fortunately, Cetti's Warblers remained and as Schedule 1 breeding birds this necessitated the closure of the cross-marsh path by CBC.
- 5.10 In 2023, in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust, the ditch network was checked to monitor the water vole population. Although this was not a full survey due to not wishing to disturb nesting birds, it found water voles exploiting all the ditches, which was an expansion on their previous distribution, and reassurance that the population survived well through the flooded period. This shows there is scope for a controlled higher water level without adversely affecting the water vole population.
- 5.11 In partnership with Natural England, Essex Wildlife Trust and Wivenhoe Town Council, proposals were discussed to introduce a system to control the water levels to an acceptable level that encourages the new wildlife to flourish, whilst minimizing the disruption to existing wildlife and still enabling the Rangers and Volunteers access to maintain the site as per the management plan, to help protect the biodiversity to continue to flourish at this site.
- 5.12 A public consultation was designed to allow users and local residents to give feedback to our proposals which included:
- Adapt the external sluice to minimise future maintenance and remove the need to unblock to prevent flooding.
  - Introduce an internal system to control the water levels to an acceptable level that encourages the new wildlife to flourish, whilst minimizing the disruption to existing wildlife and still enabling the Rangers and Volunteers access to maintain the site as per the management plan.
  - An internal water level control system could be in the form of a sluice or system of sluices that would allow the Rangers to regulate the water levels on site.
  - Water level to be established which optimises the wetland habitat and not compromising the banks already engineered for Water Voles
  - Creation of a reliable system which avoids flooding beyond the set level and reduces the risk of flooding burrows significantly.
  - Modifying the access to the site by creating a short loop to enable users to walk through a small section of reedbed.
  - Improving the surface of the sea wall to provide easier access.
  - Installing a viewing platform / screen along Rowhedge Ferry Road
  - Expanding the Nature Reserve by acquiring and managing the Crown Estate owned land adjacent to Ferry Marsh
- 5.13 In December 2023, Colchester City Council carried out the consultation asking local residents their thoughts and opinions on the following options (Results in Section 6.3 - 6.5) and Visual Summary in Appendix A):
- How do you currently access and enjoy Ferry Marsh? *Options: A walkthrough route to Wivenhoe Trail, watching local wildlife, Dog Walking, exercise, peace and tranquillity, photography, cycle route, taking children/family, Other*

- What improvements would you like to see made to Ferry Marsh? *Please rank the below in order of priority – Management of water Levels in order to prevent flooding, Management of water levels to increase wildlife and diversity and abundance, improve surfacing along the sea wall path, Installation of bird hide/screen, Seasonal access to marsh, management to decrease level of disturbance, more benches*
- The marsh does not currently include land adjacent to Old Ferry Road, it is own by Crown Estate. Would you support Colchester City Council expanding the nature reserve to include the Crown Estate land? *Yes/No/No Preference*
- Would you support Colchester City Council in introducing further methods to manage the water levels on site? *Yes/No/No Preference*
- Would you support Colchester *City Council in protecting the biodiversity through modified access to the marsh? Yes/No/other*
- Any other comments

5.14 A working group which comprised of Council officers, local Councillors for Wivenhoe Town Council, Ward Councillors for Wivenhoe and representatives from Essex Wildlife Trust and Natural England met in March 2023 to review the results of the consultation. All parties were supportive to proceed with all options listed above including keeping the main path in the Marsh closed to the general public, introducing a short circular walk so that people can still enjoy ‘entering’ the Marsh but with minimal disturbance to the wildlife and progressing the site improvements such as a viewing screen.

5.15 Colleagues in Natural England and Essex Wildlife Trust are satisfied that the above actions do not put at risk the Site of Special Scientific Interest designation for the site and in introducing a water control system, the Site of Special Scientific Interest status will be in a better position to achieve a more favourable condition.

5.16 Should agreement be given to this proposal, then the next steps include the following:

- Understanding the water levels and what they should be within the Marsh.
- Work with Essex Wildlife Trust as they have experience of installing a water control system on the River Stort.
- Work with Essex Wildlife Trust to undertake a Water Vole survey.
- Create the short loop at the northern part of the site – ensure that dogs can’t breach the loop and jump into the Marsh.
- Create bird screens - one near the Old Rowhedge Ferry Road track and one off of the short loop walk.
- Extend the outfall pipe (assuming capital funding approved by Cabinet).
- Make the sea wall accessible.
- Seek formal Natural England Ascent for any works, allowing for 28 days’ notice.

- Determine exactly what the land ownership boundaries are for the houses and the Crown Estate Land and start a dialogue around potentially managing the Crown Estate owned land and what liabilities would come with managing the land.

5.17 It might not be possible to achieve all the above simultaneously, however having a commitment to deliver them would mean including them into the Ranger's Site Action Plan for the coming year.

## 6. Consultation

6.1 In December 2023, Colchester City Council carried out a consultation asking local residents their thoughts and opinions around the options above. There were 4 drop-in sessions organised in Wivenhoe (Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December; Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December; Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January; Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2023). A total of 217 people attended the four in-person sessions whereby they were able to view information boards, engage with Council officers, ask questions to the Natural England representative, and generally find out more.

6.2 There was also an online consultation which ran for 6 weeks, and a total of 175 people responded to the online consultation.

See Appendix A for a visual summary of the results.

6.3 Over 70% of the respondents supported protecting the biodiversity of the site through modified access to the Marsh. This question is the main point of the consultation as in essence, either the Council re-allows access through the marsh which will have an adverse effect on the biodiversity of the site, or the Council continues to restrict access (modify in this case by providing an alternative) which some local residents were against.

6.4 There was over 65% support in introducing further measures to control the water levels on site and over 80% support for the Council to expand the land management of the marsh to include the Crown Estate section.

6.5 Interestingly, responses indicated that it was a greater priority to manage the water levels to increase wildlife and biodiversity closely followed by management of water levels to prevent flooding. Management to decrease / limit disturbance to wildlife in the marsh was the third highest priority.

## 7. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

7.1 An [Equality Impact Assessment](#) (EIA) has been completed.

7.2 It is considered that the proposals do not breach human rights as a service will continue to be offered.

## 8. Strategic Plan References

8.1 The proposal directly links to the vision, themes and objectives of the Strategic Plan 2023-26, specifically 'Respond to the Climate Emergency', particularly 'Conserve and enhance our biodiversity'.

## 9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 The decision will be published in a press release and available on the Council's website. The working group referenced earlier in this report will also be advised of the decision.

## **10. Financial implications**

10.1 Implementation of the above next steps will rely on budget being available part of which will be funded through the Countryside Team's site budget, with the exception of:

- The extension of the outlet pipe at a cost of £46,000; this is proposed to be within the capital programme and is subject to approval by Cabinet in October.
- Additional funding will be needed for creation of an internal water control system.
- Creation of simple bird screen and fencing around short loop path has been budgeted for in this year's site budget.
- Additional funding would need to be sought for improvements and on-going maintenance and inspection of the river wall and path which was previously managed by the Environment Agency.
- No additional funding has been identified for taking on management of Crown Estate land and this would need to be sourced before agreeing to taking this on.

10.2 As the team progresses the above next steps, it will become clearer what the financial ask will be outside of the team being able to facilitate the above, however, the creating of a short loop, bird screen and modifying access can be facilitated within the team.

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

11.1 The provision of rich green open spaces for communities is incredibly important in supporting the health and wellbeing of our communities. The provision and protection of this site ensure the Council continues its responsibilities in this regard, and to promote the positive health benefits to our residents of our countryside site, parks and open spaces.

11.2 Ensuring that the site is well managed and maintained will help support creating safe, clean and green neighbourhood, which can help to reduce the fear of crime in local areas.

11.3 This site has particularly high-quality visual landscape benefits for the local community and visitors with sweeping views over the marsh and across the River Colne.

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

12.1 The Ferry Marsh, marshland and ditches is part of the Council Water Safety review programme. Any actions recommended through the review will be actioned as appropriate.

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

13.1 There is a risk that should the decision not be supported then;

- There would be continued expenditure for clearing out the sluice pipe on a more regular basis.
- There would be potential to be unable to control flooding to the site and Wivenhoe Trail.
- Continuation of repeating the cycle of flooding and sudden loss of water when the sluice pipe is unblocked, with potential cycle of boom and bust for aquatic biodiversity.

- The status of the Site of Special Scientific Interest compartment is unlikely to be ever improved to ‘favourable’ condition.
- Inability to fully fulfil recommendations in management plan and make the proposed biodiversity gains.
- If the central path remains open, preventing disturbance to wildlife will be virtually impossible, potentially impacting biodiversity, and reducing breeding activity, with increased effects of dog flea treatments on aquatic life.
- An open central path would also likely be frequently wet and impassable. Installation of a boardwalk to make it more accessible would then be high cost, with high on-going maintenance costs and make site maintenance in general more difficult.

13.2 In proceeding with the recommendations there is a risk that;

- We are unable to fulfil all the suggested mitigation for closing the path due to budget/funding (bird screen, resurfaced paths, internal water level management etc).
- As there will be reduced public access to the site, with access limited to the perimeter and short loop path, this may cause complaints despite the consultation.
- Finding ideal water levels may take time and require further level surveys which may have cost implications.
- The Bird Screens may attract anti-social behaviour.
- There will be ongoing maintenance costs of the fences and bird screens.
- We do not find funding to take on the maintenance of the Crown Estate land and are unable to manage this as a contiguous part of the site.

## 14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

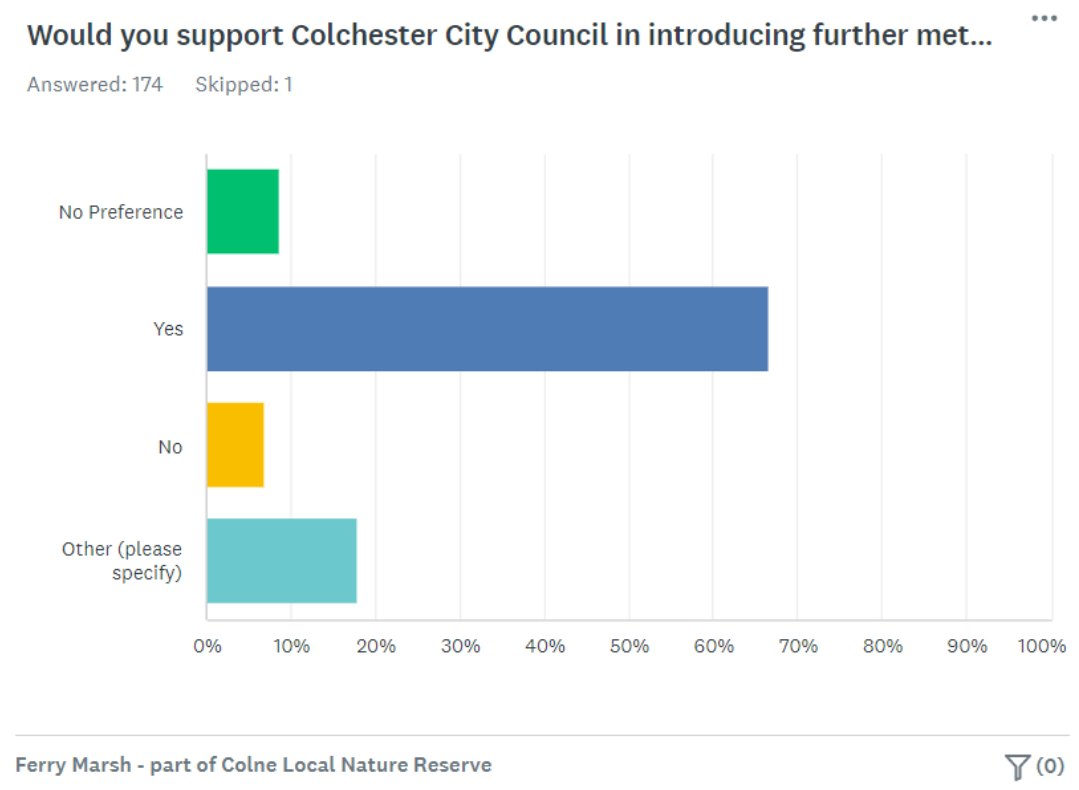
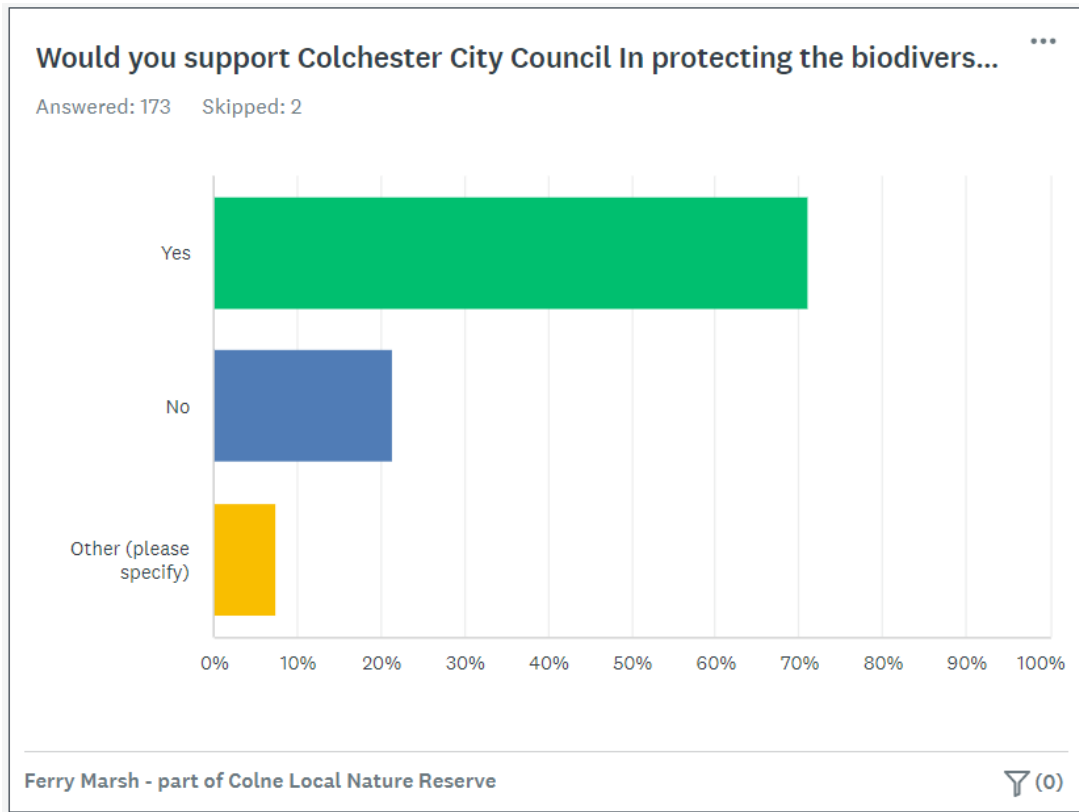
14.1 The consideration of environmental and sustainability implications of the decision being taken is set out in the table below:

<b>Sustainability theme</b>	<b>Positive environmental impact</b>	<b>Neutral impact/ Not applicable</b>	<b>Negative environmental impact</b>	<b>What are the positive and negative impacts on carbon reduction / environment?</b>	<b>How will positive impacts be enhanced/ encouraged? And negative impacts minimized or eliminated</b>
Energy		✓		n/a	n/a
Waste		✓		n/a	n/a
Procurement		✓		n/a	n/a
Biodiversity and green spaces	✓			Measures proposed encourages the new wildlife to flourish, minimize the disruption	

				to existing wildlife whilst still enabling the Rangers and Volunteers to maintain the site as per the management plan, to help protect the biodiversity to continue to flourish at this site.	
Transport		✓		n/a	n/a
Adaption		✓		n/a	n/a
Water	✓			Maintaining the wetness of the site, whilst avoiding uncontrolled flooding will provide valuable fresh and brackish water habitats particularly in times of drought. Preventing dogs accessing ditches will reduce the negative effects of flea treatments on aquatic invertebrates and disturbance to waterfowl.	
Digital		✓		n/a	n/a
Community	✓			The site continues to be publicly accessible but with enhancements to the wildlife and biodiversity that the public can experience	n/a
Housing/ Development		✓		n/a	n/a
Carbon Emissions saving	✓			A wet site provides good carbon sequestration.	Rotational dredging of ditches will release carbon but very infrequently in small amounts and is outweighed by other biodiversity gains.

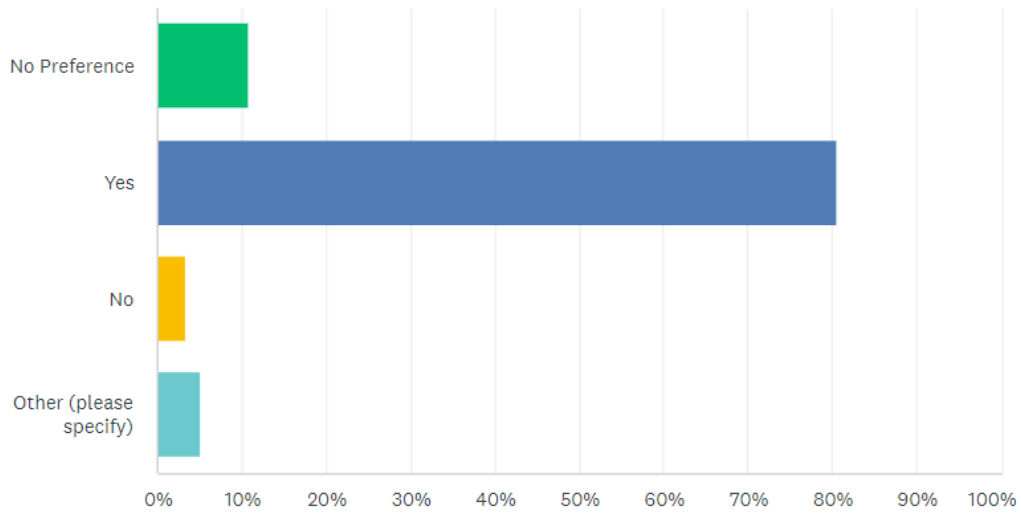


## Appendix A – Results of consultation



### The marsh does not currently include the land adjacent to Old Ferry R... \*\*\*

Answered: 175 Skipped: 0

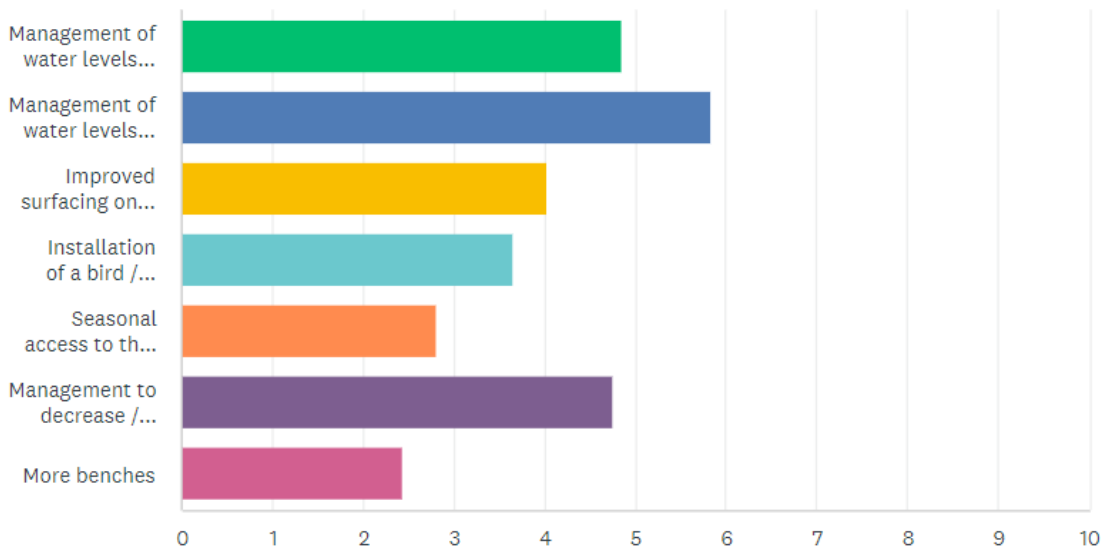


Ferry Marsh - part of Colne Local Nature Reserve

(0)

### What improvements would you like to see made at Ferry Marsh? Pleas... \*\*\*

Answered: 175 Skipped: 0



21st September 2023

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Sustainability</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>David Carter 01206 282904</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Woodland &amp; Biodiversity Project Update</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>All Wards</b>		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out and reviews the progress that has been made through the Woodland and Biodiversity Project which is now in year 5 of its five-year programme.
- 1.2 The project has evolved over the 5 years and has a clear objective and statement of purpose set out. The project focuses on three, intrinsically linked areas of work:
  - For our communities
  - For our wildlife
  - For our environment
- 1.3 The report sets out the activities being undertaken across these areas and highlights projects that demonstrate the impact being made in each.

## 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 The Woodland Project (as it was initially called), launched in 2019. In response to learning, development and challenge, the principles and objectives of the project have evolved; from a clear aim of planting trees to make the borough greener and offset carbon emissions in year 1, to incorporating increased consideration of biodiversity and community focus in year 2, to a project that now focus on developing a legacy of a greener and biodiverse future for Colchester in year 3 and 4. The following project descriptions demonstrate the evolution of the project:

### Year 1 (2019/20)

- 5.2 'The Colchester Woodland Project'

*'Over the next five years, we plan to plant 200,000 trees across the borough as part of the Better Colchester campaign. Trees and woodlands are a vital part of our eco-system, and we are committed to preserving them and helping them to flourish. This is at the very heart of the Colchester Woodland Project. We want to make our borough even greener, and we want to help our community know, love, and use our woods and parks'*

### Year 2 (2020/21)

- 5.3 'The Colchester Woodland and Biodiversity Project'

*'We plan to plant 200,000 trees across the borough in the next 5 years, as part of the Better Colchester campaign, as well as to encourage natural recovery networks that help wildlife and biodiversity. Trees and woodlands are a vital part of our eco-system. We are committed to planting trees and to helping them and wider biodiversity to flourish. We want to make our borough even greener. We want to help our community know and love and care for our environment, from wildflowers and meadows, to our woods and parks, old or new.'*

### Year 3 (2021/22)

- 5.4 'The Colchester Woodland and Biodiversity Project'

*'Is a unique opportunity for everyone to work together and develop a legacy of a greener Borough for future generations.*

*The project aims to bring about improvements in 3 areas, our Communities, our Wildlife, and our Environment.'*

### Year 4 (2022/23)

- 5.5 'The Colchester Woodland and Biodiversity Project'

The project focuses on providing a unique opportunity for everyone (no matter what background, location, age, etc) to collaborate with others and create a legacy of a greener place for Colchester in the future. This sees an important shift in how such an ambition might be delivered and articulates the important outcomes from the project. The number of plants the project aims to plant has been removed from the project description, and there is continued focus on the breadth of a diverse programme of activities.

### Year 5 in detail

- 5.6 Year 5 of the project will continue to develop in 23/24 by continuing to plant trees in suitable areas and by focusing on the naturalisation of sites, enhancing the biodiversity further, reviewing the management regimes and continue to communicate changes to our communities.

Providing a unique opportunity for everyone (no matter what background, location, age, etc) to collaborate with others and create a legacy of a greener place for Colchester in the future. This sees an important shift in how such an ambition might be delivered and articulates the important outcomes from the project. The number of plants the project

aims to plant has been removed from the project description, and there is continued focus on the breadth of a diverse programme of activities. To ensure that this aim is met, the project focuses on three intrinsically linked areas which it sets out to make tangible outcomes:

## COMMUNITIES

- 5.7 To add value to the health and wellbeing of our communities and support the development of deep-rooted connection. We will:
- Improve physical health by enabling access to green spaces for everyone
  - Enable more people to be involved in nature based outdoor activities to improve physical and mental health
  - Help communities to benefit from urban planting
  - Help families create precious memories and stories

## WILDLIFE

- 5.8 To develop, enhance and diversify our wildlife within Colchester. We will:
- Reduce mowing approaches on Council green spaces, in an effort to 'rewild' green spaces, creating habitats and an environment suitable for wildlife such as insects and pollinators
  - Create new woodlands
  - Recover and improve wildlife corridors and networks

## ENVIRONMENT

- 5.9 Reduce the environmental impact of the Council and influence others to follow our lead: We will
- Help residents and businesses to make informed decisions about their impact on the environment in Colchester
  - Conserve and enhance biodiversity by reviewing our Greening Policy
  - Banning the use of glyphosate herbicide on Council owned green spaces
  - Contribute to the reduction in drought and flood risk
- 5.10 In working towards these outcomes and to deliver the best possible approach, the team have committed to the following:
1. We will not harm existing habitats
  2. We will use natural processes as far as practicable and possible
  3. We will seek to balance the needs of people and nature
  4. We will collaborate, consult, and involve communities and partners
  5. We will allow others to take part and own the project
  6. We will use every opportunity to influence others to follow our example

## FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

- 5.11 Working with community groups on planting and activities days can deliver immense opportunity and impact on both community and individuals' health and wellbeing.
- 5.12 During year 3 of the Woodland & Biodiversity Project, seven different sites were planted and with the help of 425 volunteers, a total of 7,170 young trees were planted with a further 23,000 plants supplied to other organisations.
- 5.13 During year 4 of the Woodland & Biodiversity Project the team worked with six other organisations - The Big Green Internet, the Trust for Conservation Volunteers, The Ministry of Defense, Wivenhoe Town Council, The Unity Academy and Kent Wildlife Trust to identify suitable planting locations for the coming year.

- 5.14 During year 4 highlighting the success of the project, a presentation was given to One Colchester Climate Change Network.
- 5.15 To commemorate the Queen’s Jubilee year, we delivered the Jubilee Tree Canopy Project in partnership with our local communities. 22 Jubilee Oak Trees were planted by Town and Parish Councils in November 2022.
- 5.16 We delivered a Blossoms Circles programme, commemorating 2020 at King’s Meadow. Planting took place early in 2022 and the Council facilitated three planting days. With NHS staff attending the second planting day and various Councillors who joined the launch. Around 124 volunteers helped plant the blossom circles. Four local poets were invited to write poems which are now displayed at the site, and the poetry reading event took place in April which was a huge success. As part of the ongoing maintenance of the blossoms circles replacement tree planting will take place during November 2023 for the small number of trees which did not establish during 2022.
- 5.17 125 Street Trees were planted during year 4 of the project. . Work is underway to identify sites for 2023 and an application form has been completed and sent to ECC which requests funding for 225 street trees to be planted in locations which have been suggested by local Councillors.

Funding was secured to provide planting at the new Stanway Community Centre. The council entered into a partnership with Market Field School who delivered the project and maintenance until October 2023.

- 5.18 The team are also working on the following activities:

<p>C.1 Deliver an engagement campaign (schools, households, business, care homes)</p>	<p><b>Recognise those residents who support the project</b>  Across many sites in the Borough residents are taking it upon themselves to care and protect the newly planted sites. These ‘Tree Guardians’ are now being recognised and provided with the tools to help them continue with their roles. A campaign to recruit more Tree Guardians and showcase the wonderful work they do and the impact they make is being shared.</p> <p><b>More communities are aware and involved in projects</b>  Local schools have been contacted and offered trees and shrubs, along with farmers, landowners, and businesses for their landholdings.</p>
<p>C.2 Work with community organisations on activities</p>	<p>Our new Community Orchards project was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 with an open invitation to all community organisations, town &amp; parish councils and schools to propose sites where fruit trees might be grown to provide habitats for wildlife and a food source for people and pollinators alike!</p> <p>During autumn 2023 170 fruit trees will be delivered. The team are currently identifying potential sites for their suitability for fruit tree growing.</p> <p>Local schools and community groups have been contacted and offered trees along with landowners, businesses for there landholdings.</p>
<p>C.3 Deliver community planting days</p>	<p>The ambition to continue to plant trees and plants has not diminished and the project is continuing to deliver this aim.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity and spaces contribute to health of individuals</li> <li>• Larger communities' benefit from urban and peri-urban planting</li> </ul>	<p>There have been over 68,000 trees planted so far, and in year 5 there are at least a further 2,000 planned. Officers are currently in the process of developing the plans and consulting on community planting days.</p> <p>As in previous years The Woodland Trust (WT) assess the suitability of each site and the location, scale and species mix of the trees being used. They provide funding for this element of the project and have supported and funded the Council's approach of using only biodegradable rabbit guards, reducing the risk of contaminating the local environment with plastic debris.</p>
<p>C.4 Deliver Trees for Years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So residents can make a difference in their own gardens</li> </ul>	<p>Trees for Years will be delivered across the Borough much like in 2023. This is to ensure easier access for residents and to reduce travel time for those wishing to collect items. It is estimated that 10,000 trees and shrubs will be provided for residents.</p> <p>To ensure resilience and help manage the process, the distribution will be delivered through a click and collect service as this proven method that has been developed over the last couple of years enables residents to book a time to collect their trees as a location near to them.</p> <p>To facilitate the click and collect service, tree packs will be developed to suit different garden sizes.</p> <p>Officers will work with Parish Council and community groups for distribution sites, and it is anticipated the same sites will be used in February 2024.</p>
<p>C.5 Use Street Tag to encourage residents to monitor sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents are engaged with the impact of biodiversity and habitat recovery</li> </ul>	<p>Community enabling colleagues, working in partnership with the Essex Local Delivery Pilot have launched Street Tag, a free interactive app that promotes physical activity in a fun and accessible way.</p> <p>Street Tag turns physical activity into a game by converting walking, running, and cycling into Street Tag points (tags). It is a way to transform streets and parks into a giant virtual playground for local communities. Competitors compete to top the leader board and win prizes. More information can be found here: <a href="http://www.colchester.gov.uk/street-tag">www.colchester.gov.uk/street-tag</a>.</p> <p>In linking to this project, tags have been added to all the rewilding sites and encourage users to monitor the locations (e.g., the number of butterflies they see).</p>
<p>C.7 Greening the Orbital:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wayfinding, barrier removal, route enhancements as part of Phase 1 of</li> </ul>	<p>Colchester Orbital wayfinding discs have been installed on all CCC sites. Work is now taking place to install discs on sites that are not owned by CCC to increase accessibility and wayfinding along the Orbital.</p>

Greening the Orbital programme	
<p>C.8 Undertake (street tree) urban planting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More communities benefit from urban and peri-urban planting</li> </ul>	<p>Officers are working with colleagues on other Town Centre projects like the trees planted in containers at North Station Road and establish the opportunity for further tree planting as plans emerge.</p> <p>Officers are also working with Essex County Council and Essex Highways to establish the ability to increase urban planting. One opportunity is planting where dead or dying trees have been removed historically, and not replaced – these locations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Working with the Essex Forest partnership CCC have been successful in securing funding for urban tree planting from the Local Authority Tree Scape Fund (LATF) in 2021 &amp; 2022. An application has been submitted 2023 with the outcome known in November. Local residents have been helping to maintain the trees as part of the Tree Guardians scheme including watering and tightening tree ties.</p>

## FOR OUR WILDLIFE

### Continue to deliver the Colchester Greening Policy

- 5.19 The Greening Colchester Policy was presented and agreed by the Environment and Sustainability Panel on 17 September 2020. Its aim was to stop the use of glyphosate-based products through a phased approach on Council owned land. The timeline published has been met and officers continue to work with partner organisations on implementing changes to their policies also.
- 5.20 Currently the following alternative methods of weed control are being carried out on Council owned land:
- Vegetation around obstacles and play areas is being cut back twice per year.
  - Vegetation along fence lines is being left to grow for wildlife and cut once per year
  - Non glyphosate weedkillers are being used on weed growth in car parks and pathways on CCC owned land.
- 5.21 As part of the Council’s commitment to remove glyphosate-based products, the policy also introduced the stopping or reducing of grass cutting in specific areas to improve biodiversity and visual amenity of the grass verges, creating rewilded, wildflower or naturalised woodlands.
- 5.22 In 2022, alternatives to using glyphosate were rolled out on all CBH sites and the Cemetery and Crematorium. Agreed alternative for this year included:
- Obstacles to be strimmed every 6 weeks.
  - Hard surfaces to be hand weeded every 4 weeks.
  - Borders to be hand weeded where required on each visit.
  - Additional wildflower areas added for 2022, with one cut in September.
  - Additional “No Mow” butterfly signs delivered and used on CCC parks land.



- 5.23 Now that the policy has been in place and we have extended it to other sites as above, a review is currently being undertaken on the impact and effectiveness, and recommendations or changes will be made as appropriate.
- 5.24 It has been found that there is excessive weed growth on hard surfaces due to the cessation of Glyphosate herbicide and the initial aim to hand weed every 4 weeks has not been able to be achieved, due to the time it takes to weed at each site. The proposal to rectify this is to carry out an ongoing programme of strimming supported by hand weeding throughout the growing season. The use non harmful herbicides such as Katoun Gold will only be considered for spot treatment if strimming or hand weeding are not possible but will not be for general use.
- 5.25 Weeds in borders have also been prevalent and much like hard surfaces above, the preferred method of weed control will be by hand. Until a viable alternative is available it is proposed to use non glyphosate herbicides twice during the growing season on selected areas This is a reduction of using harmful herbicides at every visit and it will allow the teams to continue to hand weed on each visit, however the weed growth will be less. The use of non-glyphosate herbicide like Katoun Gold will only be undertaken when conditions allow to minimise spray drift onto plants and non-target insects. The team in partnership with Colchester Borough Homes have also trialled using bark mulch on borders and where this is applied, weed growth has been suppressed significantly. As a result of this positive impact and in conversations with other local authorities, it is proposed that a programme of mulching all border sites be undertaken. Increasing the amount of mulched borders, will reduce the amount of non-glyphosate herbicide required going forward.
- 5.26 The team are also working on the following activities:

<p>W.1 Undertake Phase 1 planting and planning at Cymbeline Meadow to create a new woodland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new woodland</li> <li>• Recover biodiversity and habitats</li> </ul>	<p>There is an ambition to create a new woodland and Nature Reserve at Cymbeline Meadow. The aim is to replace agricultural land and enhance existing areas to deliver a diverse and rich mosaic of habitats across the whole site, for future generations of Colchester.</p> <p>Working with the tenant farmer plans have been drawn up detailing areas of hedge planting, pond and wetland creation, areas of nectar rich grassland, scrubland, bird seed rich crop areas and tree planting, including areas for future coppice woodland.</p> <p>CGI artwork has been produced which shows two of the main views across the meadows with year one and year 5-10 tree planting and meadows.</p> <p>Archaeological trenching has been carried out over the areas which are proposed for tree planting.</p> <p>The Woodland Trust have been assisting with the environmental impact assessment (E.I.A.) and supply of the native tree stock for community planting days in February/March 2024.</p> <p>This work helps to deliver objectives of the Greening The Orbital programme.</p>
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W.2 Engage and enable Parish Councils to establish new woodlands	Town & Parish Councils will be contacted and offered free trees and shrubs for planting on their land or for distribution to their residents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable others to create new woodlands</li> </ul>	
•	
W.5 Continue to deliver the Colchester Greening Policy	See above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced environmental impact of the Council</li> </ul>	

## FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT

5.27 All of the objectives are intrinsically linked and an example of this is the work undertaken with Wivenhoe Town Council.

### The Wivenhoe Project (Nature Recovery Sites)

5.28 Wivenhoe Town Council (WTC) worked with the Council's officers to trial a "no mow, no sow" management regime between March and September 2021 at 12 designated open spaces and residential verges in the town. The objectives were to work more closely with communities and establish if a local approach could increase biodiversity and to assess public reaction. This would be the first approach of this type undertaken by the project team, undertaken as a trial, so that if it was successful, it could be used as a template and example to roll out to other Councils and partners.

5.29 Following the successful trial over the summer of 2021, it was agreed that more sites within Wivenhoe would be left longer incorporating the 'no mow, no sow' principle. A total of 24 sites are now 'no mow, no sow' sites in Wivenhoe. In October 2023 some sites will have additional wildflowers introduced to increase the range of native species.

5.30 In 2022 other Town and Parish Councils were invited to an open evening where Wivenhoe Councillors and representatives from the Greening Team walked some of the 'no mow, no sow' sites and discussed the projects, shared best practice and issues that arose when changing the management regimes.

5.31 In Greenstead Nature Recovery sites. at Magnolia Fields and Hickory Avenue have been left as wildflower sites. It is anticipated that more discussions will be held with other Town and Parish Councils and local Councillors to identify further sites across the Borough.

5.32 The team are also working on the following activities:

•	
E.3 Roll out the Wivenhoe Project to other Parish Councils	See above

<p>E.4 Deliver an education campaign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform others of our management methods and provide examples of how these can be applied</li> </ul>	<p>Officers continue to deliver presentations and talks to others, sharing the work undertaken by the Woodland and Biodiversity Project, locally, regionally, nationally and most recently at the Eco Festival in September 2023.</p>
<p>E.5 Provide help, support, and prepare Colchester for the future changes that may come forward from the new Agriculture and Environment Bills, through conversations and dialogue with farmers and landowners.</p>	<p>Officers are working with the current tenant Farmer at High Woods Country Park to develop proposals for meadow improvements.</p> <p>Officers are working to draw up Biodiversity Net Gain guidance for developers, officers, Members, and the public, in anticipation of the Environment Bill being enacted this autumn and to identify sites for Net Gain in the borough. A template supplementary planning document is being produced by Essex County Council (ECC) on Biodiversity Net Gain. CCC officers have provided feedback on this and will be adopting as our own (and adapt as appropriate) when final legislation is produced by Government.</p> <p>Officers will be in discussion with ECC about the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Essex. The LNRS work seek to identify areas and habitats of high biodiversity value, map where biodiversity recovery has taken place, identify further areas and habitats which may become important and agree a set of measures to protect biodiversity. CCC officers will be consulted as a 'supporting authority' on the development of this strategy. The Environment and Sustainability Panel will receive updates on the progress of this at key points throughout the year.</p> <p>Officers are in discussion with partners about how to create a Nature Recovery Network for the borough.</p>
<p>E.6 Influence planning, strategies, policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the environmental impact of the Council</li> </ul>	<p>Officers are working on developments on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colchester Orbital Guidelines</li> <li>Landscape Development Guidance</li> <li>Green Infrastructure Guide</li> </ul> <p>Officers are also updating the Council's natural assets register to assist with conversations and plans for carbon offsetting.</p>

## 6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 Throughout the work of this project Officers have taken due care in giving due consideration to equality and diversity and this is demonstrated through the rewording of the project and the commitments that the project team have created

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

- 7.1 This project supports the Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2026, specifically the theme of 'respond to our climate emergency' and the priority of 'conserve and enhance biodiversity'. It also contributes to the theme of 'improve health, well-being, and happiness' through the various engagement and planting activities outlined in the report.

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 The approach to consultation on each of the activities has been dependent on the scope and aim of the specific activity due to the diversity of the work undertaken, but as the commitments set out in 5.9:

4. We will collaborate, consult, and involve communities and partners
5. We will allow others to take part and own the project

- 8.2 These commitments have been tested throughout the project and due consideration has been given to the timeliness and method of consultation for each activity.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 As with consultation, due consideration has been given to those who may be affected by activities. The team have consulted and listened to feedback and made changes, as can be demonstrated throughout this project.

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1 Year 5 the Council has provided funding up to £80,000 to deliver most of the work set out above, purchasing of plants and trees, fencing, marketing, equipment and maintenance, and technical assessments.
- 10.2 To deliver on more ambitious schemes, officers are working with the partners and other organisations to source external funding and support.

## **11. Community Safety Implications**

- 11.1 It is hoped that working with organisations such as Market Field School, Trust Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and TWG on community planting days, the project can work towards aims of providing opportunities to support community safety and community cohesion.

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

- 12.1 The project does not cause any harm to the health and safety of the general public.

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

- 13.1 Risks and opportunities are assessed based on each activity due to the variety of the work being undertaken.

## 14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 The project has very clear aims and objectives for the project in relation to the environment, nature, and sustainability. The outcomes in delivering these for Colchester residents are:

### Improving health and well being

- Those living closer to greener space in urban areas have been found to experience lower rates of anxiety -[Imperial College London \(2019\)](#)
- Increasing access/proportion of green space in local areas can help develop more active lives, promote communication and socialising with others, as well as helping to capture carbon and improve air quality ([Public Health England, 2020](#))
- [Around 9 in 10 people surveyed by Natural England in May 2020](#) agreed that natural spaces are good for mental health and wellbeing. More than 40% noticed that nature, wildlife, and visiting local green and natural spaces have been even more important to their wellbeing since the coronavirus restrictions began

### Contributing to reducing climate risk:

- It is estimated that there are around 2,000 heat-related deaths each year in England and Wales and this number is expected to more than triple to over 7,000 by the middle of the century, as a result of climate change. ([Link](#))
- Approximately 250,000 properties are at risk of flooding in the East of England, posing risks to mental health and wellbeing of the population as well as the operations of businesses ([source](#))



21<sup>st</sup> September 2023

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Climate Emergency Project Officer</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Ben Plummer</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Colchester City Council emissions – Draft figures for Financial year 2022/2023</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>		

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 As part of the Council's climate emergency declaration, a target was set to reach carbon neutrality for Council services and operations by 2030. The Council monitors and annually reports on its emissions, and this report contains information on emissions from the 2022/23 financial year.
- 1.2 Figures are being finalised for 2022/23, but a provisional total figure for emissions in this year is 5491.81 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. A full greenhouse gas report will be published in late Autumn 2023 to show the finalised figures and analysis of the results.
- 1.3 The Council is now creating a Carbon Management Plan to identify actions to reduce emissions from the Council's buildings, with the plan containing overall upfront costs, cost savings, greenhouse gas emission savings, timescales and possible funding routes for each action.
- 1.4 The Council is also beginning a project with Anthesis to understand more about the costs and level of resource required to develop and monitor offsetting projects. The Council will have a proportion of emissions it will not be able to reduce, so it is important that the Council understand and can plan for how it will achieve carbon neutrality which will include a contribution from offsetting.

**2. Recommended Decision**

- 2.1 The Panel note this report detailing the Council's emissions, and are encouraged to ask questions about how carbon emissions have been calculated and reasons for any changes in emissions between financial years. As detailed in the report, values for emissions may differ slightly between this report and the finalised published Greenhouse Gas Emissions report as data is queried.

**3. Reason for Recommended Decision**

- 3.1 The report is for information only.

**4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Not applicable

## 5. Background Information

### Council emissions

- 5.1 As part of monitoring progress towards achieving the carbon neutral target by 2030 for Council operations, the Council records and publishes its emissions for each financial year annually. The Council re-established a calculation of its emissions in financial year 2018/19. This was set as the 'baseline year' after the declaration of the climate emergency, with progress measured in reducing emissions from this year.
- 5.2 The Council reports its emissions in the unit, tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO<sub>2e</sub>). There are a range of different greenhouse gas emissions from Council operations including carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane, nitrous oxides and more. All greenhouse gas emissions have different '[global warming potentials](#)', which quantifies how much each of them contribute to warming (i.e. their varying ability to trap heat). CO<sub>2</sub> is the most abundant greenhouse gas and thus the global warming potential of all greenhouse gases are equilibrated to that of CO<sub>2</sub> to make reporting easier.
- 5.3 The Council calculated its emissions using [emission conversion factors](#) provided by Government. These conversion factors are embedded within the free bespoke [Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool](#) for local authorities produced by consultant [Local Partnerships](#) which the Council uses for its emissions reporting.
- 5.4 The Council reports its emissions in the form of different 'scopes', as set out in the [Greenhouse Gas Protocol](#), an internationally recognised standard for measuring emissions. These scopes are defined below:
- Scope 1: These are direct emissions arising from activities of an organisation, including fuel consumption on site, including that from gas boilers and fuel used in fleet vehicles.
  - Scope 2: These are indirect emissions produced from electricity that is purchased and used by the organisation. The emissions are generated during the production of this electricity which is then used by the organisation.
  - Scope 3: These are all other indirect emissions from activities of the organisation, but that occur from sources which the organisation does not own or control. Activities included in this scope of the GHG report are staff commuting and business travel, water supply and treatment, waste production, emissions from staff working from home and transmission and distribution losses of electricity from the National Grid.
- 5.5 A summary of the sources of the Council's emissions are provided below:
- **Gas consumption** used for heating Council buildings
  - **Electricity consumption** used within Council buildings
  - **Fugitive emissions** – These are emissions involved with the leakage of refrigerants used in air conditioning units in the Council's buildings. This will be reported on for the first time in financial year 2022/2023.
  - **Fuel consumption** from Council's fleet, staff commuting and business travel. This includes electricity consumption from electric vehicles in the fleet.
  - **Water consumption** in Council buildings/sites – Emissions involved in the supply and treatment of the water that is used.



- **Waste production** from Council building/sites – Emissions involved in the transportation of this waste and its disposal (the latter only for landfill).
- **Working from Home (WFH)** – Estimated emissions associated with gas and electricity consumption used by employees working from home.
- **Transmission and Distribution (T&D) losses** – These are emissions associated with the losses of electricity during its transmission from electrical generation sites to where it is used.

These are all emission sources recorded for reporting on in the Council’s carbon neutral target.

### Council’s emissions in 2022/23

5.6 A breakdown of the Council’s emissions as recorded for financial year 2022/23 is shown in table 1 and figure 1. Figure 2 shows progress in reducing the Council’s emissions since the baseline financial year of 2018/19.

Table 1: Council greenhouse gas emissions recorded for financial year 2022/2023

Emission source	Emissions in financial year 2022/23 in tonnes of CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent (% of total)	Scope of reporting
Gas	2658.71 (48.4%)	Scope 1
Electricity	814.49 (14.8%)	Scope 2
Fugitive emissions	To be calculated	Scope 1
Fleet	1354.9 (24.7%)	Scope 1
Commuting	41.62 (0.8%)	Scope 3
Water	32.32 (0.6%)	Scope 3
Business travel	26.66 (0.5%)	Scope 3
Waste	254.63 (4.6%)	Scope 3
Working from home	233.18 (4.2%)	Scope 3
Transmission and Distribution losses	75.30 (1.4%)	Scope 3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5491.81</b>	<b>N/A</b>

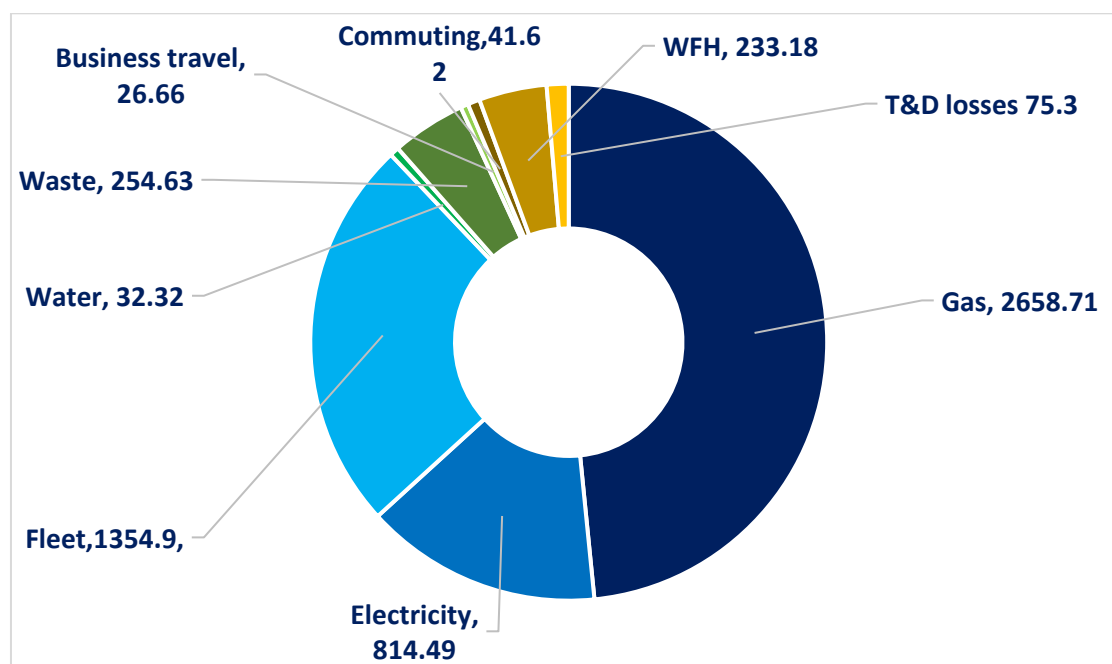


Figure 1: A breakdown of the Council’s emissions in financial year 2022/23, with emissions in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e outlined, along with each emission source contribution as a percentage.

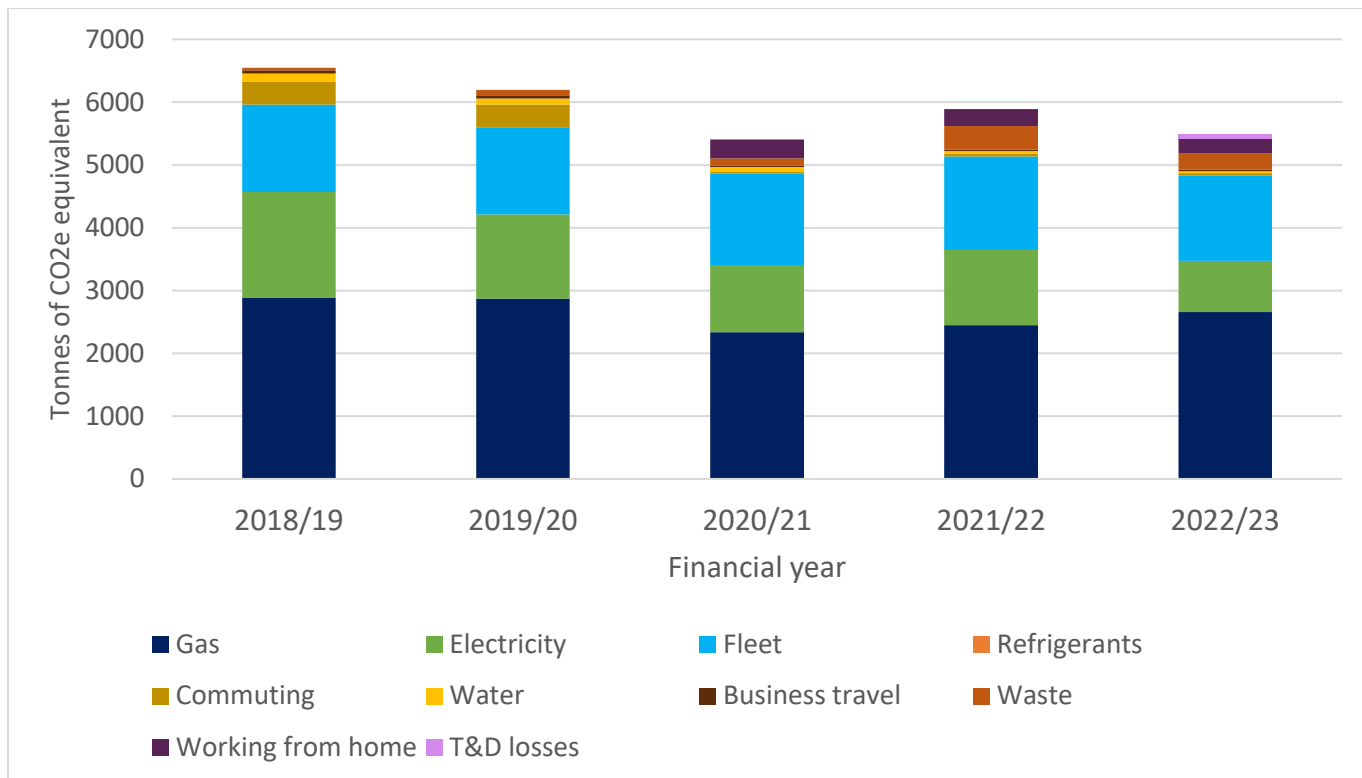


Figure 2: Council's greenhouse gas emissions over the last five financial years that are included in the Council's carbon neutral target.

5.7 It should be noted that the figures for financial year 2022/23 are subject to change while some queries around energy consumption data in this year are resolved. A full greenhouse gas emissions report will be published in late Autumn 2023 confirming final figures to be reported for this financial year.

### Initial analysis of results

5.8 As shown in figure 2, the Council's emissions have decreased by approximately 6.7% in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. An explanation of some of the key reasons for this are explained below:

- Misreporting of electricity calculations** – In previous years, a portion of the electricity consumption at Leisure World had been double counted. This is because although electricity consumption at this site comes from the Grid and rooftop Solar PV, a portion also comes from electricity produced from a combined heat and power (CHP) unit on site. This unit is fuelled by gas and acts like a mini generator to produce electricity for heating pumps and air handling units, whilst also producing heat as a by-product to be used. In previous years, emissions associated with electricity produced by the CHP was being linked to the gas used by the CHP **and** emissions produced from electricity from Grid, hence a double counting of emissions. In 2022/23, 1,417,220 kWh of electricity were produced from the CHP, which would equate to 274.06 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e if from the grid. Essentially this figure is a reduction made on the Council's emissions in 22/23, which was being over-reported in previous years.
- Decarbonisation of the electricity grid** – Year on year, the proportion of electricity produced from the national grid by renewable energy is increasing, meaning a reduction in emissions associated with electricity consumption. Between financial years 2021-22 and 2022-23, approximately 80 tonnes of carbon has been reduced from the decarbonisation of the electricity grid, based on the electricity consumption used by CCC.

- **Electrification of the fleet** – In early 2022, the Council procured six electric vans alongside the five electric vehicles used in the North Essex Parking Partnership fleet and the four hybrid vehicles used by Helpline. These were the first electric vehicles the Council had got, and hence the first time the difference they made to vehicle emissions recorded in 2022/23. It was calculated that the emissions saved by the electric and hybrid vehicles was approximately 31.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. This was calculated by comparing the emissions produced by these electric and hybrid vehicles in 2022/23 (based on their mileage), with the emissions associated with the same mileage if completed in equivalent diesel vehicles.
- 5.9 However, in 2022-23, several buildings have been shut or added to the Council's portfolio which leads to fluctuations in emissions between financial years. For example, Rowan House, the Council's main office, was shut for the whole of financial year 2022-23 while it was refurbished. New buildings to be added to reporting for 2022-2023 included the temporary usage of the Gosbecks Road Office, alongside a full year of reporting for the Colchester SportsPark which was reported on in 2021-22 (but not for the full financial year).

### **Carbon Management Plan**

- 5.10 The Council will now be progressing on to creating a Carbon Management Plan to help identify further actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions produced in the Council's buildings. Work has been continuing to collect data on each of these possible actions to identify upfront costs, energy and cost savings, greenhouse gas emission savings, timescales for implementation and possible ways to fund these actions.
- 5.11 For example, phase 2 of the Government's Swimming Pool Support Fund being administered by Sport England will open for applications in October 2023, which will fund energy efficiency and decarbonisation works. The Council are preparing an application to fund works at Leisure World which include a water filtration system, pool covers, 'smart' motors and LED lighting improvements. The Council is also expecting to prepare a bid to the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for funding to contribute to the installation of a low carbon heating system and LED lighting for the Natural History Museum.
- 5.12 The plan will aim to have several project ideas developed for consideration for investment in 2024/25 capital budgets, plus further aspirational projects for potential implementation in future years. The Council will present a copy of this plan to the Environment and Sustainability Panel at the next meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

### **Carbon Offsetting**

- 5.13 The Council will attempt to reduce emissions from its estate and operational activities as much as possible, but there will be a proportion of residual emissions remaining that cannot be eliminated. This will be for a variety of reasons including economic unviability (e.g. high costs to retrofit some of the Council's historic buildings) and lack of technical feasibility. Therefore, in order to reach our carbon neutral target, the Council will need to invest in opportunities to help offset emissions. This means that the Council will have to either develop its own projects to offset emissions or invest in existing projects that are reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to claim carbon savings.
- 5.14 Over the last two years, [Anthesis Group](#), a sustainability consultancy, have been developing a framework to facilitate the development of local projects that can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions through offsetting to receive funding. The framework is called '[Area Based Insetting](#) (ABI)' and has been set up to enable organisations like

local authorities to either; develop projects for offsetting that need top up funding to enable them to happen, or contribute top up funding to emission saving projects in their locality to help reach carbon targets.

5.15 The Council will be working with Anthesis between September 2023 – April 2024 to build a suggested approach for the Council to develop and/or invest in offsetting. This will include:

- Identifying the costs and resource required to implement, monitor and verify projects that deliver emission savings for offsetting through different offsetting mechanisms (such as the voluntary carbon market, regulated market, through ABI).
- Understanding how the Council can get involved in the ABI framework to either fund or develop projects for offsetting.
- Developing ideas for offsetting projects that are validated by Anthesis to identify opportunities for carbon saving and check they meet recognised offsetting principles of additionality (i.e. project wouldn't happen without top up funding), permanence (i.e. once carbon savings are achieved they cannot be reversed) and verification (i.e. can carbon savings be monitored effectively). This aims to then give confidence into developing these ideas into projects that the Council can use for its offsetting.

5.16 This work will include engagement with staff within CCC along with other local authorities in Essex and partner organisations like the University of Essex to help share knowledge on local offsetting and potentially identify shared opportunities for investing in offsetting projects locally. A final presentation of results will be shared with councillors, with an aim that a meeting is arranged for this in March/April 2024.

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

6.1 There are no equality, diversity and human rights implications of the report.

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

7.1 This report directly links to the Strategic Plan 2023-2026 theme of 'Respond to the climate emergency'.

## **8. Consultation**

8.1 There are no consultation considerations.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

9.1 There are no publicity considerations.

## **10. Financial implications**

10.1 There are no financial implications of this report. Financial implications involved in the implementation of actions to be in the forthcoming Carbon Management Plan will be discussed with the Finance team as appropriate.

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

11.1 There are no direct health, wellbeing and community safety implications of this report.

## **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.

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

14.1 The report details how the Council is reducing greenhouse gas emissions from its operations and assets, and how some of these will have positive co-benefits such as cost savings (from reducing energy consumption) and improvements in air quality (from reducing use of fossil fuel vehicles). Further actions to reduce emissions will be outlined in the forthcoming Carbon Management Plan, alongside work to understand the need and opportunities for offsetting which will be identified through work on carbon offsetting that is being completed with Anthesis Group.



21<sup>st</sup> September 2023

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

## 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 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023.

1.2 Key highlights include:

- The adoption of the [biodiversity supplementary planning document \(SPD\)](#) at Local Plan Committee. This provides guidance on protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the creation of new developments, including for protected species, creating space for nature in design and on householder applications. The active travel and climate change SPDs are currently out for consultation.
- The introduction of an **electric bike hire scheme** in Colchester, supported by TIER who currently provide the electric scooters for the pilot scheme. There are 100 bikes available for hire, offering another form of shared travel for residents that supports physical activity and reducing emissions.
- The Council has received **£28,288.00 from the Government's Low Carbon Skills Fund** which will help fund surveys and design works for a low carbon heating system and LED lighting at Natural History Museum.
- Castle Park, Highwoods Country Park and Colchester Cemetery and Crematorium all **retain their Green Flag status** commending them as high quality green spaces.
- The Council has **received £21,586 from the [Chewing Gum Task Force](#)** to purchase new vacuum machines to remove chewing gum from streets.
- **51 free bikes** have been distributed through the Essex Pedal Power project in Greenstead to people who can use these to increase access to employment, education and for leisure.
- The Council has launched a [new webpage](#) that will detail how residents who are eligible for **energy efficiency grants** can apply for these.
- 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 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. Background Information**

### **Key updates**

#### **Biodiversity supplementary planning document**

5.1 Local Plan Committee have recently approved the adoption of the new Biodiversity supplementary planning document (SPD). The SPD provides developers with what the Council expects to see in terms of the protection of biodiversity in new developments. Information contained in the SPD includes that on protected species, mitigation hierarchy for protecting biodiversity alongside principles to help create space for nature in developments. Guidance is also provided for supporting biodiversity as part of householder planning applications. The SPD can be viewed [here](#). The supplementary documents created on climate change and active travel are currently out for consultation and are available to comment on [here](#).

#### **TIER electric bike hire scheme**

5.2 The Council has agreed with TIER, the company providing the electric scooters for the pilot in Colchester, to introduce an electric bike hire scheme in Colchester. TIER have provided an initial 100 electric bikes to hire around Colchester. These are not placed in docks, but riders must place the bikes in designated parking bays detailed on the app in the centre of Colchester in order to end their ride, and outside the centre of Colchester riders will be encouraged to leave bikes in designated parking bays through reduced charging rates. This scheme complements existing sustainable travel options for residents including electric scooters, car club and soon to open cargo bike hire scheme in the city centre secure bike park.

#### **Low Carbon Skills Fund**

5.3 The Council was successful in securing £28,288.00 to fund survey and design works for the proposed installation of an air source heat pump and LED lighting in the Natural History Museum. This museum, which is planned to be going under a major refurbishment to its layout and exhibitions in 2024/25 subject to a National Lottery Heritage bid, would benefit from these works which would complement the educational focus of the museum around conservation and sustainability. The plan is to then bid into the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme this Autumn to receive funding for the installation of the capital works.

#### **Green Flags for Colchester's Parks!**

5.4 The Castle Park, Highwoods Country Park and Colchester Cemetery and Crematorium have again been awarded Green Flag Awards from Keep Britain Tidy. The award recognises parks and green spaces that are maintained well, achieve high environmental standards and provide excellent visitor facilities.

#### **Funding to remove chewing gum litter**

5.5 The Council has received £21,586 from the Chewing Gum Task Force, created by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Keep Britain Tidy and major chewing gum manufacturers. The funding has been used to purchase a new electric vacuum machine, plus three handheld electric vacuums to help remove gum from known hotspots.

## **Essex Pedal Power**

- 5.6 The Essex Pedal Power Scheme which aims to increase support more people to cycle in order to enable them to improve their physical and mental health alongside access to job and education opportunities, has been set up in Greenstead for several months. The project part funded through Town Deal funding had distributed 51 free bikes by mid-August, alongside delivering cycle training sessions, with the aim to giveaway 100 bikes by the end of September and develop opportunities for more social rides and bike maintenance workshops.

## **Energy Efficiency grants**

- 5.7 The Council has created a [new webpage](#) detailing the different energy efficiency grants available to residents to help increase the energy efficiency of their homes. More information will be added on the webpage as access to grant opportunities begins to launch in late September – early October. The Council will also be advertising the grants through a series of in-person pop-up events in different locations across Colchester and these will be advertised through local community groups, parish councils, local facilities etc.

## **Free Adult Cycle Training**

- 5.8 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 advance 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 park, 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.





## Environment and Sustainability Panel

Item  
**11**

21 September 2023

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Assistant Director Corporate and Improvement Services</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Matthew Evans</b> ☎ ext. 8006
<b>Title</b>	<b>Work Programme 2023-2024</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	Not applicable		

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the current Work Programme 2023-2024 for the Environment and Sustainability Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.

### 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the Work Programme for 2023-2024.

### 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Work Programme of this Panel is kept under review throughout the municipal year to ensure that business is progressed and Members have the opportunity to review upcoming agenda items.

### 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 This function forms part of the Panel's Terms of Reference and, as such, no alternative options are presented.

### 5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Environment and Sustainability Panel deals with existing and emerging environmental issues, and will focus on carbon footprint reduction and monitoring and supporting the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- 5.2 The Panel's Work Programme will evolve as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting the opportunity is taken for the Work Programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances.

## **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 Environmental Sustainability is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing.

## **8. Consultation**

8.1 There are no consultation considerations for this report.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.

## **10. Financial implications**

10.1 There are no specific financial implications from this report.

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

11.1 With the actions provided in the updates, the Council is trying to improve health and wellbeing through the actions it is taking to improve environmental outcomes. The 'co-benefits' of environmental action are well documented. For example, improving the management of our green spaces for biodiversity can bring enjoyment and mental health benefits for residents, supporting residents to cycle more improves both their physical and mental health and increasing the energy efficiency of homes helps to improve thermal comfort and physical health.

11.2 There are no community safety implications from 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 report.

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

14.1 There are no specific environmental and sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

## WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

<b>Environment and Sustainability Panel</b>
<b>Meeting date / Agenda items -</b>
Environment and Sustainability Panel - <b>22 June 2023</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Overview/Introduction of Climate Emergency Action Plan and key progress.</li><li>2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – progress update.</li></ol>
Environment and Sustainability Panel – <b>20 July 2023</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update</li></ol>
Environment and Sustainability Panel – <b>21 September 2023</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve Improvements</li><li>2. Woodland and Biodiversity update</li><li>3. Greenhouse gas report review</li><li>4. Climate Emergency Action Plan update</li></ol>
Environment and Sustainability Panel – <b>06 December 2023</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Carbon Management Plan</li><li>2. Draft Recycling and Waste Strategy</li><li>3. Review of fleet transition</li><li>4. Climate Emergency Action Plan update</li></ol>
Environment and Sustainability Panel – <b>08 February 2024</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Housing and Sustainability</li><li>2. Climate Emergency Action Plan update</li></ol>

Environment and Sustainability Panel – **21 March 2024**

1. Air Quality Projects update
2. Active and Sustainable Travel projects update
3. Climate Emergency Action Plan update/Summary of the year