



Environment and Sustainability Panel Meeting

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

Wednesday, 06 December 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.

Access to information and meetings

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<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/MeetingCalendar.aspx>.

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Access

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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
Wednesday, 06 December 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 Chairman will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chairman 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 Chairman 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 Councillors will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 are a correct record.

Environment and Sustainability Panel draft minutes 21 September 2023

7 - 20

6 Have Your Say! (Hybrid Council Meetings)

Members of the public may make representations to Panel meetings on any item on the agenda or any other matter relating to the business of the Panel. This can be made either in person at the meeting or by joining the meeting remotely and addressing the Panel via Zoom. Each representation may be no more than three minutes. Members of the public wishing to address Council remotely may register their wish to address the meeting by e-mailing democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk by 12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting. In addition, a written copy of the representation should be supplied for use in the event of technical difficulties preventing participation at the meeting itself.

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

7 Essex Climate Action Commission Update

21 - 28

The Panel will consider a report outlining some of the key actions which have been completed by Essex County Council that have been fed back to the Essex Climate Action Commission, and outlining where Colchester City Council has been involved with these actions.

8 Domestic Energy Efficiency Funding and Support

29 - 36

The Panel will consider a report providing detailed information regarding the delivery and successes of various domestic energy efficiency grants that are available to low-income households and residents with qualifying health conditions.

9 Council Climate Action Scorecards Summary

37 - 54

The Panel will consider a report outlining the results of the Council Climate Action Scorecards and the ways in which the Council is already addressing some of the identified gaps in the assessment.

10 **Climate Emergency Action Plan Update** 55 - 60

The Panel will consider a report detailing key progress and updates from actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) and other relevant updates since the last meeting on 21 September 2023.

11 **Work Programme 2023-2024** 61 - 64

The Panel will consider a report setting out its work programme for the current 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

21 September 2023

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

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

Also present:

100. Minutes of the previous meeting

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

101. Have Your Say!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

102. Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve Improvements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RECOMMENDED TO Cabinet that:

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

RESOLVED that:

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

103. Woodland and Biodiversity Project Update

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED that: the contents of the report be noted.

104. Council Emissions 2022/223

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED that: the contents of the report be noted.

105. Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED that: the contents of the report be noted.

106. Work Programme

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED that:

- the contents of the work programme be noted.

6 December 2023

Report of	Head of Sustainability	Author	Ben Plummer
Title	Essex Climate Action Commission Update		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC) was created by Essex County Council (ECC) to be an independent group that could set recommendations for action on climate change and the environment across Essex. The group initially produced a report, 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral' which detailed these recommendations, and now act as an advisory body for reviewing climate and environment workstreams undertaken by ECC.
- 1.2 This report outlines some of the key actions being completed by ECC that has been fed back to the ECAC. It also outlines where Colchester City Council (CCC) has been involved with these actions.
- 1.3 The actions explained in the report include:
 - Creating business cases for offsite biodiversity net gain on ECC owned land.
 - Development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to outline ways to improve biodiversity across Essex.
 - Creation of the 'climate focus area' where pilot climate and environment projects will be conducted to accelerate action to reach net zero emissions across Essex.
 - Delivering funding and support for domestic energy efficiency programmes and community energy groups.
 - Creation of new waste strategies at both the ECC and CCC level to encourage waste reduction and recycling across Essex.
 - Developing net zero planning policies for new homes, that show the legal, financial and technical feasibility for building to this standard.
 - Creating a draft Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy to set out ECC's plans for installing charge points for electric vehicles where people will otherwise struggle to access charging.
 - Delivery of funding and support to encourage active travel across Essex, including new walking and cycling routes.
 - Enabling communities to access funding, support and training for them to reduce their environmental impact and create environmental projects.
 - Co-ordination of an Essex wide 'Climate Action Anchors Working group' to bring together large organisations across Essex to help create opportunities for joint climate action and knowledge sharing.

- Offering support and funding to local businesses and other organisations to help support a transition to a green economy, with new skills and jobs that respond to the challenge of climate change.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the work completed by both ECC and CCC in collaboration, and request any updates on projects and actions described in the report.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The report is for information only.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC) was launched in May 2020 and is made up of over 30 members including local councillors, academics, business people and 2 members of the Young Essex Assembly. The role of the Commission is to monitor implementation of climate and environmental action across Essex, provide advice on work priorities, encourage public engagement with the climate and environment agenda and support the adoption of climate and environmental policies at all levels of local authority in Essex.
- 5.2 The Commission developed the report "[Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral](#)" report which outlined plans and recommendations to make the county of Essex net zero by 2050 and to make Essex more resilient to climate change impacts like flooding, drought, overheating and more. These recommendations now form the basis of Essex County Council's Climate Action Plan.
- 5.3 The Commission now receives updates on work completed by Essex County Council (ECC), split up by different environmental themes listed in the Commission's report and that form the base of the [Essex County Council Climate Action Plan](#). For clarity, the ECAC now acts as an advisory group to steer action on climate change across Essex rather than being a body that takes climate action itself. Key progress and actions across each of these themes will be covered below, highlighting where Colchester City Council are working with ECC on these actions, are benefitting from the actions, or delivering similar programmes of work ourselves.

Land Use and Green Infrastructure

- 5.4 Delivering 10% minimum biodiversity net gain for new developments will become mandatory in early 2024. Developers can either meet their net gain requirement through carrying out biodiversity net gain (BNG) on site of the development, off site, through a national statutory credits scheme, or a combination of these. ECC have developed plans to improve habitats on two of their own sites for off site BNG. ECC will invest funding in these two sites to deliver habitat improvements and have identified the BNG credits generated through the improvements which can then be sold to developers who cannot meet their BNG commitments on site of development. CCC has started conversations with ECC about CCC owned land that could be put forward as offsite pilot BNG projects. These would be sites which have the potential to generate income through sale of credits to support ongoing maintenance of the habitats for 30 years minimum as required through the Environment Act BNG legislation. CCC are also working with ECC on developing a BNG supplementary planning document (SPD) for developers.
- 5.5 ECC are also developing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, as a required action from the Environment Act, which will outline areas of importance for biodiversity across Essex, identify where actions to restore nature have been taken and determine key areas for improving biodiversity and connecting these up. CCC will play the role of 'supporting authority' feeding in plans for biodiversity improvements across Colchester and changes in the Local Plan.
- 5.6 ECC have developed the '[climate focus area](#)' (CFA) in the Blackwater and Colne catchments, as areas where pilot activity for many environmental projects will occur that help deliver environmental land management practices. There are multiple aims of the CFA including that 30% of land in it is to be managed as natural green infrastructure and every parish to have a climate emergency strategy. There are multiple projects taking place in the CFA including a project looking at business cases for landowners to develop

BNG, soil carbon and woodland carbon projects, improving more farmland to deliver benefits to nature with creation of farm clusters and working with 3 parish councils (Tiptree and Wivenhoe Parishes participating in Colchester) in the area to develop nature plans.

Energy and Waste

- 5.7 ECC, working with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub, have secured £18.7m of funding from the [Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2](#) to improve properties where the fuel source is off gas, property inefficient and residents are on lower incomes. CCC has received an allocation of £2.16m and is marketing this scheme currently to get referrals. This builds on the back of Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme funding which has delivered £458,659 of improvements to homes in Colchester since 2021. ECC are also looking to deliver Energy Company Obligation Phase 4 (ECO4) flex funding throughout Essex through a shared agreement mechanism with all local authorities. CCC have also started delivery of ECO4 flex and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) flex, partnering with the National Energy Foundation and their 'Better Housing, Better Health' helpline service which is working to process resident enquiries and direct residents to appropriate support if they are not eligible for a grant scheme.
- 5.8 ECC are providing funding and supporting Community Energy South to deliver support for community energy groups in Essex. Projects being conducted by these groups include community renewable energy projects and energy efficiency advice and support programmes. [Community Energy Colchester](#) are working with Community Energy South on this programme, providing opportunities for residents to have low cost energy efficiency improvements for their home and other support for energy bills. The Council have recently started working with Community Energy Colchester to support residents throughout the Home Upgrade Grant application process as part of a pilot to see the effectiveness of community energy groups as messengers for increasing uptake of these grant opportunities.
- 5.9 ECC have been supporting renewable energy across Essex, providing access for residents to get discounted solar panels and battery storage for their homes through the Solar Together programme. They are also working to secure a community fund for energy projects as part of the development of the commercial Longfield solar farm.
- 5.10 ECC are developing a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2024-2054 with the aspiration of Essex being a zero waste county by 2055. This work will overlap with CCC's work on creating a new Recycling and Waste Strategy. Through the 'Love Essex' brand, ECC have been supporting waste projects in the community by providing microgrants and hosting Freegle for items to be donated in the community. They have also been piloting ways to improve food waste recycling in Essex by providing more communications, food waste liners and more; Colchester was involved in this project in Summer/Autumn 2023.

Built Environment

- 5.11 ECC's Climate Action Planning Unit has been supporting local authorities on work to incorporate net zero and environmental commitments into planning processes. A headline piece of work has been carried out which demonstrates that it is financially, technically and legally possible for local authorities to mandate for developers to build net zero new homes by 2025. Expert support has been sourced from consultants and legal firms in order to determine this. A draft net zero policy is being developed by Essex, which can then be adapted by local authorities to introduce their own policies in their local plans.

- 5.12 ECC have also been developing guidance on building net zero dwellings, including appropriate design principles and including key technologies such as air source heat pumps. This is to be tested with a pilot in Essex for constructing 10 new homes that will be net zero in construction and in use.

Transport

- 5.13 ECC have developed a draft Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy which has been consulted on, to get feedback on installation of charge points for electric vehicles across Essex.
- 5.14 ECC have also created an Air Quality Strategy in order to comply with requirements in the Environment Act to help improve air quality in air quality management areas (AQMAs). There are 4 AQMAs in Colchester, and CCC have already been attempting to improve air quality in these areas with several successful Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) air quality bids to get grant funding which have developed projects on no-idling, air quality awareness, electric bike pay as you go hubs, electric cargo bike deliveries and more.
- 5.15 ECC have been providing support to help people to cycle through providing funding to run free bikeability training sessions for adults and families to increase their cycling confidence. CCC have been promoting this training, and requiring that residents complete the adult advanced cycle training in order to use the electric bikes in the city centre secure bike hub. ECC have also been providing support to the Essex Pedal Power project that is taking place across Tendring, Colchester and Basildon, where free bikes are being given to residents in order to increase access to cycling for leisure and work opportunities. Over 100 bikes have been given out in Colchester through this programme to residents in Greenstead with a further 600 available to give out.
- 5.16 ECC have also been working on planning the delivery of improvements to encourage active travel (walking, cycling, scooting etc.) across Essex by improving physical infrastructure to support this. For example in Colchester work is already being planned for active travel improvements between the city centre, University of Essex and Greenstead. ECC have also facilitated the electric scooter pilot in Colchester, which Colchester City Council has built on, partnering with TIER to introduce pay as you go electric bike hire in Colchester too.

Community Engagement

- 5.17 In order to raise awareness of climate change and the action we can all take to reduce our environmental impact, ECC have worked with [GreenRedeem](#) to develop the Carbon Cutting Essex app. This app provides blogs, quizzes and pledge ideas to help people learn more about environmental issues, and for completing activities they can get 'points' which can be used to enter prize draws or donated to charities.
- 5.18 ECC also provided the £500,000 Climate Action Challenge Fund to support 40 projects run by community groups, organisations and schools to tackle climate change. This funding helped organisations in Colchester to secure funding for their work such as Community Energy Colchester, Prettygate Schools and Stanway Fiveways Primary School.
- 5.19 ECC have also been training their employees in Carbon Literacy with over 300 employees now receiving carbon literacy accreditation. CCC has just launched an environmental awareness elearning course for staff to learn more about climate change,

and specifically the Council's projects and action to tackle climate change. A 4 hour carbon literacy course has also been arranged for many of the councillors to attend in early 2024.

- 5.20 ECC host the Climate Action Anchors Working Group, which brings organisations from across Essex including the Colchester City Council and other local authorities, University of Essex, Colchester Institute, NHS trusts to discuss opportunities for joint approaches to tackle climate change across Essex and to share knowledge on what we are all doing as organisations on this issue. Smaller working groups have been created to co-ordinate work on a variety of topics including fuel poverty awareness, air quality and understanding level of demand for public estate decarbonisation.

A just transition to a Green Economy

- 5.21 This is not a theme in the ECAC report, but will run through many of the actions identified within it and is addressed in ECC's Climate Action Plan. Tackling climate change provides the opportunity for new jobs, but there is a need for people to have the skills to be able to do these new jobs (known as 'green skills').
- 5.22 ECC have been setting out ways to identify and tackle the gaps in green skills needed across Essex. One element of this has involved ECC securing funding to deliver training partnering with The Retrofit Academy to train local installers and groups in housing retrofit training courses. This will help organisations deliver energy efficiency retrofit to the required Government standards and develop a local supply chain for completing this work. Colchester is one of the areas that have benefitted from access to this training.
- 5.23 There have also been grant schemes for businesses to enable them to make their operations more environmentally friendly or understand more about their environmental impact. For example, the 'Low Carbon Across the South and East' (LoCASE) programme running since 2016 gave £2.6m to 397 businesses across Essex, including several in Colchester. ECC have also recently launched funding for 'green entrepreneurs' to enable 18-30 year olds to pitch for seed funding to create a green business. CCC have promoted support available to businesses including that available from Colchester Business Enterprise Agency (Colbea), Colchester Institute through their carbon literacy programmes and advice and support provided through the Colchester Travel Plan Club.

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 includes many cross overlinks with themes in the Strategic Plan 2023-2026 including 'Respond to the climate emergency', 'Improve health, wellbeing and happiness' and 'Grow our economy so everyone benefits'.

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.

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 This report details a variety of actions and projects being undertaken by Essex County Council, to which Colchester City Council overlaps and collaborates with them, on climate and environmental action. These actions aim to deliver net positive impacts for the environment and society, with these impacts considered as part of project delivery.

6 December 2023

Report of	Head of Sustainability	Author	Keith Parker-Larkin
Title	Domestic Energy Efficiency Funding and Support		
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides detailed information regarding the delivery and successes of various domestic energy efficiency grants that are available to low-income households and residents with qualifying health conditions.

The Grant schemes discussed are:

- Green Homes Grant LAD3 (Local Authority Delivery, Phase 3), a grant for on-gas grid properties. This grant delivered 63 installed measures to 36 properties, resulting in £319,325.83 of grant funding being allocated.
- ECO4 Flex (Energy Company Obligation, Local Authority Flexible Route, phase 4), a grant for all fuel type properties. This grant scheme is currently open to applications, and take up is good, with 42 to date of publication having been referred for application processing and signposting to alternative grant schemes where applicable. Colchester City Council is currently the only local authority in Essex offering this scheme outside of social housing properties.
- HUG2 (Home Upgrade Grant, Phase 2) A grant for off-gas properties, with £2.16 million awarded to Colchester City council to deliver improvements to 120 properties. This scheme is currently open, with targeted marketing to increase uptake.

2. Recommended Decision

2.1 The Panel is asked to support the work of the Council to promote these energy efficiency grant schemes to residents and help with promotion and outreach of these schemes where they can. This role has been carried out by the Domestic Energy Efficiency Improvement Coordinator and the Panel are requested to support the work carried out by the person in this job role going forward.

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 Colchester City Council (CCC) is offering and delivering a range of energy efficiency grants to residents across the district, to enable qualifying applicants to access grant funding to have retrofit measures installed in their properties. These measures could include insulation, solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, air source heat pumps and other energy efficiency measures. These grant funds come from different sources including Government and energy companies (scheme administered by Ofgem) as part of their obligations to help low income, fuel poor and vulnerable households to heat their homes.
- 5.2 The grants are for households with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) D-G (A being the highest energy performance property, G the lowest rating for efficiency), that are either low-income households (income below £31,000.00) and/or on a qualifying benefit, and/or for households that have a person residing that has a qualifying health condition that is exacerbated by the cold.
- 5.3 The energy efficiency measures that are installed in the qualifying property are intended to raise the EPC of the property, thereby making the property better insulated, warmer, and potentially cheaper to heat. The measures are installed, in most properties, at no cost to the applicant and are fully funded; there may be a cost to landlords, who may receive up to two-thirds funding.
- 5.4 **Domestic Energy Efficiency Improvements Coordinator: Background**
- 5.5 In previous iterations of the energy efficiency grant schemes (explained later in this report), CCC's direct involvement with the grants was limited to signposting residents to the application websites and helplines via the Council's web pages.
- 5.6 For the current grant schemes, however, including the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2), there has been a requirement of local authorities to administer and promote the schemes and check all applications. This has caused many local authorities issues with capacity and funding for staff to facilitate these additional needs and requirements.
- 5.7 Colchester has addressed this by funding the post of Domestic Energy Efficiency Improvements Coordinator (DEEIC) from September 2022 until March 2023 provisionally, through a combination of limited funding from the grant funding schemes, the majority funded through Inequalities funding provided by the Suffolk Northeast Essex Integrated Care System (SNEE ICS) and East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT).
- 5.8 In funding this fulltime role, CCC has resolved the need for and burden on staff working on these schemes alongside their own work roles, by creating a dedicated role that can focus on administration, project management, promotion, and outreach. The role has a dedicated phone number and email for enquiries, which can assist customers with verifying cold callers offering grants, liaising with grant funders where necessary, and making referrals to grant schemes for vulnerable customers and/or those without digital access or with additional needs. Data from 1st September to 31st October shows 82 inbound calls were received, which demonstrates the need for the number and role. The role also offers customers general cost of living and energy saving advice and signposting to energy relief and external agencies as and where appropriate.

5.9 CCC is, or has been, delivering the following grants:

LAD3 (Local Authority Delivery Grant, Phase 3)

- Available to ON- gas grid properties only.
- Available to Owner- Occupiers, Private Rental Sector Tenants/Landlords
- Properties rated D-G EPC
- Households on incomes below £30,000 or receiving a qualifying benefit
- Grant scheme was open from March 2022 and closed end March 2023

5.10 CCC was awarded £689,823.23 for LAD3 from Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (now Department for Energy Security and Net Zero), and all applications and customer journey, from application to installation of measures in eligible properties, was managed by Warmworks Scotland (WW). They were procured and appointed to the project by the Greater Southeast Net Zero Hub (GSENZ).

5.11 All administration and data reporting for Colchester was conducted by the DEEIC. It should be noted that throughout the Southeast and Essex, GSENZ have managed LAD3 consortia projects in collaboration with Local Authorities: whilst CCC was not part of the consortia bid, we were nevertheless able to use their services for LAD3 in Colchester such as utilising the dynamic purchasing system for jobs to be allocated to installers and for procurement and use of the managing agent Warmworks for customer journey (from referral to install).

5.12 This has proved particularly useful in mitigating issues with under- performance by the managing agents, mainly due to capacity and lack of industry contractor capacity, which in turn has resulted in less properties receiving measures than initially forecast. For instance, installation in homes did not start till October 2022 despite the scheme running since March 2022, partly due to the previous phase of the Local Authority Delivery Scheme overrunning.

5.13 Overall delivery is detailed as below:

- Initial KPI target of 57 properties to receive installation measures.
- 36 properties received energy efficiency measures.
- Total of 63 energy efficiency measures installed across 36 properties.
- **Total value of installed energy efficiency measures, including post survey costs and fees: £319,325.83.**
- **An additional £73,441.52 was spent on administration fee for WW, DEEIC salary and GSENZ fee.**

5.14 Full breakdown of volume and types of measures installed are available on request but omitted from this report for ease of reading.

5.15 ECO4 FLEX (Energy Company Obligation, Flexible Local Authority Route, Phase 4) and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS)

5.16 ECO4 is the 4th iteration of the ECO grant scheme and has £1 billion in funding available nationally for each year of the scheme, which runs until March 31st, 2026. The scheme, administered by Ofgem, aims to improve the energy efficiency of the whole house, and is funded through an obligation from medium to large energy suppliers to improve the ability for residents to heat their homes for those considered to be on low incomes and in fuel poverty.

5.17 In order to potentially qualify for the scheme residents must fit the following criteria:

- Available to all fuel types: Gas, Electric, Solid Fuel, Oil, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)
- Available to Owner-Occupiers, Private Rental Sector Tenants/Landlords
- Properties rated D-G EPC, with an emphasis on properties of EPC E or below.

Residents can then qualify through various 'routes' for the scheme, fitting one or sometimes requiring a combination of the following criteria:

- Household income below £31,000.00 (pre-Tax deduction)
- Qualifying benefit
- Health Routes: Immunosuppression; Cardiovascular; Respiratory; Limited Mobility
- Health Route 2: Clinically vulnerable to cold as defined by NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence)

5.18 The GBIS is a new grant scheme offered which helps residents install single insulation measures to their property. The aim of this grant was so residents could quickly access funding for easier to install measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation. It is also administered by Ofgem and complements ECO4. Eligibility for this scheme is opened up with properties needing to meet the relevant EPC criteria and be living in a property with Council tax band A-D, removing the criteria on the resident's income, qualifying benefits or health conditions.

5.19 Unlike previous schemes, CCC is required to check eligibility and sign off all application submissions to Ofgem, currently being undertaken by the DEEIC role.

5.20 In order to help administrate the scheme, CCC has procured [Better Housing, Better Health](#) (BHBH), a subsidiary of the charity National Energy Foundation, to host the application helpline and referral enquiry portal, which undertakes initial eligibility checks of applicants, before assigning to contractors for surveys and return of the application to CCC for final checks and Ofgem submission. This service is fully funded, meaning the Council does not have to pay to access it.

5.21 It should be noted that CCC does not hold any funding for ECO4, and that all works installed by contractors are verified externally and funding to the contractors approved by Ofgem. Therefore, contractors operate "at risk" and there is limited reputational or associated risks involved for Colchester City Council.

5.22 To date, there has been good uptake of this scheme, with 42 applications to BHBH helpline, driven largely by continued promotion of the energy grants by the DEEIC. There have been very few ineligible applications; these have been offered alternative schemes where applicable and possible, such as BHBH's access to boiler replacement funding. Most of these applications are at the stage of arranging property surveys to further confirm eligibility and identify appropriate measures for the properties.

5.23 BHBH can also signpost residents to alternative funding support schemes. For example, several properties have also received additional support such as National Grid Grants, Fuel Poverty small measures support and 1 instance of grant funding where alternatives are not possible through traditional grant funding. Several applicants have been successfully referred to LEAP Boiler Replacement scheme, available through BHBH only.

5.24 **Home Upgrade Grant, Phase 2 (HUG2)**

- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) backed grant for OFF- gas grid properties only.
 - Available to Owner-Occupiers, Private Sector tenants and landlords (landlords must not have a property portfolio of more than 4 properties unless they are a charitable organisation, and can receive two-thirds funding towards measure costs)
 - Applicants must have total household income less than £31,000.00 or in receipt of an eligible benefit.
 - Properties must have EPC between D-G
- 5.25 CCC have identified properties that are automatically eligible for HUG2 due to having postcodes that indicate the property is in an area of IMD ratings 1-3 (Indices of Multiple Deprivation,): this is from guidance produced by DESNZ aiming to upgrade multiple sets of addresses close together to make installations more efficient and cost effective. Letters have been sent to these properties inviting them to apply, from both CCC and the Managing Agent for HUG2 in our region, Warmworks.
- 5.26 CCC have also identified properties that *may* qualify, and these have also been sent letters; it should be noted that there are thousands of properties that are off gas-grid in the district. Therefore, it has been necessary to target specific areas that are more likely to have “clusters” of off grid properties that may qualify: we have chosen to target Highwoods, Tiptree, Boxted, Mersea, and parts of Greenstead, Newtown, Castle wards. This is also necessary from a contractor- capacity and delivery perspective, as it is more cost-effective to deliver measures to multiple properties in specific areas than individual properties. Residents outside of these areas are also welcome to apply if they think they meet the eligibility criteria.
- 5.27 CCC have been awarded funding totalling £2.16 million across the 2 years of the project. This equates to a target of 120 properties, based on an average spend of £18,000.00 per property. Spends on each property can vary depending on the housing type and its current fuel type with property caps applied by DESNZ. This may result in more or less properties being completed.
- 5.28 Key to uptake of this scheme is promotion and publicity: In addition to the letters that were sent, the DEEIC is promoting HUG2 through a series of “pop-up” explanatory events across the district, followed up with targeted doorstep calls to residents who received letters and direct marketing.
- 5.29 CCC has been chosen by GSENZ as a pilot area for partnership working to engage and generate applications for HUG 2. As part of this CCC will be delivering an Asset Based Community Development approach, working with Community Energy Colchester (CEC) to deliver outreach sessions and cascade advertising for the scheme.
- 5.30 Take up and delivery data are as below:
- As of 22nd November, over 700 letters have been sent out (this includes Colchester City Council letters, targeted households and letters from the managing agents, Warmworks)
 - Referrals to telephone application line: 11
 - Referrals via website application: 2
 - There have been 14 “pop-up” events in November to promote HUG2 and ECO4 events, with more planned for December and January.

- Plans are developed for a social media targeted advertising approach, as well as further pop-ups in January, including Colchester Market, Langham Community Centre and potentially West Mersea, as well as online drop-in sessions.
- Our community engagement partner, Community Energy Colchester (CEC), funded by Greater South East Net Zero Hub and Community Energy South, is undertaking a pilot scheme, whereby they will be targeting a selected number of properties on Colchester's list; these will receive direct mail-outs, followed up by in-person visits by CEC to explain the scheme and assist with applications. Community Energy South and Greater Southeast Net Zero Hub will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach and pilot.

6.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 Not applicable

7.1 Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 All of the Energy Grants available to residents are compatible with and tie in with the Strategic Plan's themes of 'Respond to the Climate Emergency' and 'Improve health, wellbeing and happiness'.
- 7.2 By retrofitting domestic properties and installing energy efficiency measures, CCC are helping to reduce the property's carbon footprint and emissions as well as improving the energy performance of the property, attempting to lower energy costs for the resident.

8.0 Consultation

8.1 Not Applicable

9.0 Publicity Considerations

9.1 Not Applicable

10.0 Financial implications

10.1 The financial information associated with delivery of the grant schemes are discussed in Section 5.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 All of the Energy Grant schemes listed above have eligibility criteria limiting the grants to properties with an EPC D-G (A the highest, G the lowest rating for efficiency). These properties are likely to be the most affected by the cost-of-living crisis and cost of energy bills.
- 11.2 There is also a correlation between, and evidence supporting, energy inefficiency and poor health, which can be exacerbated by the effects of a cold home. By offering energy grants to these and low-income households, it is envisaged that both health, mental wellbeing, and finances can be improved through the installation of energy efficiency measures. A well-insulated home means a warmer home, and one that is cheaper to heat. As the grants have stated minimum EPC uplift targets (for example, a G rated property must end at a minimum of E rating), a reduction in energy bills can be stated with a strong degree of certainty.

Case Study

- One recipient of the LAD3 grant who had loft insulation and solar PV installed stated “The house feels warmer and that has a positive impact on my and my family’s health. Especially for me, with a chronic condition, it makes a big difference to my health. I can put electric heater on during cold sunny days because of the solar panels without worrying about electricity bills”.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 Not Applicable

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 Not Applicable

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 By delivering this grant funding, we are enabling residents to have the energy efficiency of their properties improved. Under many of these schemes residents can also access the funding to replace their heating systems with more efficient and/or low carbon heating systems. By improving energy efficiency of the property, the home’s energy demand should decrease, and, in most cases, this corresponds with a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions produced.

6 December 2023

Report of	Head of Sustainability	Author	Ben Plummer
Title	Council Climate Action Scorecards Summary		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Climate Emergency UK, a not-for-profit co-operative published their Council Climate Action Scorecards, an assessment into climate and environmental action by all UK local authorities, in October 2023. The Council received a score of 34% in this assessment, which was higher than the district council average of 29%.
- 1.2 Analysis of the Council’s scorecard was completed. This identified several positive actions including energy performance of the Council’s housing stock, work on developing shared travel methods (e.g. electric scooters, electric car club) and efforts to phase out use of glyphosate and reduce mowing of green spaces.
- 1.3 The assessment also identified several notable gaps in the Council’s performance on tackling climate change. Whilst much of this action that can be taken is restricted by limited staff and budget, there are many actions that the Council could consider to improve its climate and environmental performance.
- 1.4 Several actions are already being taken to address the gaps in the scorecard. These include:
 - Beginning to offer a service for residents to access support and funding on domestic energy efficiency through getting access to the ‘Better Housing Better Health’ helpline provided by the National Energy Foundation.
 - Receiving support from Essex County Council about how we can request higher building standards than the minimum building regulations, aiming for net zero homes through planning policies.
 - Producing a more detailed greenhouse gas emission report, that details our calculation methodology.
 - Developing an elearning course for staff on environmental awareness, alongside arranging training for members on carbon literacy.
 - Using peat free compost in our parks.
 - Taking part in a pilot to help understand ways we can reduce the environmental impacts associated with the delivery of events.
 - Delivering kerbside food waste recycling for residents. The assessment identified the Council as not offering this but this has been queried with Climate Emergency UK and the mark will be awarded retrospectively.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 This report is intended to outline the results of the Council Climate Action Scorecards and the ways in which the Council is already addressing some of the identified gaps in

the assessment where we were not awarded points. Councillors are welcome to advise on ways we could try and achieve further action on climate change, or comment on the methodology and scoring of the scorecards.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The report is for information only and it is not suggested there is any decision that needs to be made on the back of this report.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. Background Information

Background to the Climate Scorecards

- 5.1 Climate Emergency UK are a not for profit co-operative who set up to help provide support to local authorities and other organisations who were making climate emergency declarations. Their aim is to provide supporting resources to help local authorities take action on their declarations, whilst also acting as a critical friend to hold local authorities accountable for the climate action they are implementing.
- 5.2 In 2021 they conducted an exercise to rate all UK local authority climate action plans with the results published in January 2022. In this exercise, the Council received a score of 52% which was above the district council average score of 43%. We then strengthened the content of our action plan on the back of the feedback provided by Climate Emergency UK and published a new version in January 2023.
- 5.3 Climate Emergency UK then wanted to assess how well local authorities are actually **implementing** climate action (rather than just plans). Therefore, they created a methodology and criteria, with a range of supporting organisations, that outlined actions that local authorities could take on climate change and environmental issues to assess them against. This was called the 'Council Climate Action Scorecards'. Local authorities were then scored against these criteria in Spring 2023 and the results published in October 2023.

Methodology

- 5.4 The methodology of questions developed was created with help with organisations such as Ashden, Friends of the Earth, Council officers and other consultants.
- 5.5 The methodology was split into seven sections; Buildings & Heating, Transport, Planning & Land Use, Governance & Finance, Biodiversity, Collaboration & Engagement and Waste Reduction & Food. Each section had different weightings dependent on the local authority type and based on how much control and influence they were considered to have over this and the associated impact on emissions.
- 5.6 Individual questions were then also weighted on a scale of 1-3 depending on the level of impact on emissions reduction. Each question had a different number of marks that could be gained, with some having different levels of criteria to show improved performance on a question (e.g. the percentage of Council homes that have an EPC of C – This question was out of 3 marks, with 1 mark given if 50% were EPC C, 2 marks if 60% EPC C and 3 marks if 90% or more were EPC C). Some questions were given 'penalty points' if the Council was seen to be taking or approving an action that would lead to an increase in emissions (e.g. Has the council approved, expanded or built a high carbon transport project since 2019?).
- 5.6 Data to produce the scorecards for each Council was collected through a variety of means including Freedom of Information requests, nationally available data sources (e.g. from UK Government) and from publicly available data on the Council's website, local media and more. Actions taken between 1st January 2019 – 31st March 2023 were reviewed.
- 5.7 A full detailed methodology that expands on the points above is available to view [here](#).

Scorecard results

5.8 The Council’s overall score was 34%, greater than the 29% average district council score and achieving the highest score for a district council in Essex. The outline scorecard, showing the scores for each section, compared with the average district council score is shown in the table below. Scores for all Councils can be viewed on the [Climate Emergency UK website](#).

Section	Colchester City Council score	Average District Council score
Buildings & Heating	45%	42%
Transport	56%	9%
Planning & Land Use	15%	23%
Governance & Finance	38%	24%
Biodiversity	25%	22%
Collaboration & Engagement	54%	42%
Waste Reduction & Food	17%	23%

- 5.9 It should be noted that despite the scorecards being created in such a way that it makes the comparison like a ‘league table’ of local authority scores, it should be reflected that different Councils will have their own unique challenges to taking climate and environmental action, and some will have greater focus and resource on some areas of tackling climate change (e.g. transport, energy) than others. This is reflected in the Local Government Association’s position on the Council Climate Action Scorecards exercise which can be viewed [here](#). It should also be made clear that some of the actions within this assessment do fall outside the full direct control of the Council.
- 5.10 A full breakdown of how many marks the Council got for each question in the scorecards can be seen in appendix A. This will be used and referred to in the results analysis section of the report. You can also view this on the [Climate Emergency UK website](#), where you can also see the full criteria and marks for each question.

Results analysis

- 5.11 This assessment is useful for highlighting several areas of good performance for the Council. It is worth highlighting that in the transport section, the Council scored the 4th highest score out of all district councils (186 in total). Specific points of good performance identified in the scorecard include:
- Energy performance, and emissions targets, for the Council’s own housing stock
 - Support for households to receive funding/support for retrofitting their own homes
 - Delivery of several different shared transport schemes (e.g. ebike hire, escooters, ecar club)
 - Phasing out of glyphosate and reductions in mowing regimes on green spaces
 - Presentation and reporting of work completed through the Climate Emergency Action Plan
 - Partnership working with institutions in the borough like schools and local businesses
- 5.12 However, the report did identify actions that the Council was not implementing at the time of the assessment. These are identified through the lower scoring questions and sections in Appendix A. Each section will be analysed in turn to identify where the

Council is working on addressing the gaps identified in the assessment, and also where further action will be required for other actions.

Buildings and Heating

- 5.13 From appendix A, there are obvious gaps with low marks on questions 1.2, 1.5, 1.8, 1.9 and 1.12. On 1.2, the Council could procure a 100% renewable energy tariff with a recognised provider, however this would come at an increased uplift compared to the current tariff when electricity prices are already high. We do already procure a 'Zero Carbon for Business' tariff with EDF Energy but this was not considered by Climate Emergency UK to meet the criteria for a 100% renewable energy tariff. On 1.5, we have delivered some work on retrofit training with Essex County Council (ECC) but it is not something we currently have a co-ordinated approach on and perhaps could be handled better at a county level to develop improved retrofit skills support across Essex. For 1.8, previous attempts have been made to hire a staff member to help enforce the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the Private Rented Sector but this was unsuccessful. For question 1.12, we have not had the capacity to support community renewable energy projects, however we have been supportive of the energy efficiency support work delivered by Community Energy Colchester.
- 5.14 We are addressing question 1.9, by partnering with the 'Better Housing, Better Health' helpline service offered by the National Energy Foundation to help refer customers to support and funding to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and/or save money on their energy bills. This work began in September 2023, after the assessment period.

Transport

- 5.15 There were fewer gaps in this section. The main one identified was the lack of electric vehicle charge points in the borough. This will be addressed in part by work with ECC who developed their draft Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy which identifies the approach to implementing electric vehicle charge points, particularly in Council owned car parks and where residents do not have access to off street parking. The Council will work closely with ECC as this develops to ensure residents in Colchester benefit from this.
- 5.16 The Council did receive penalty points for questions 2.12a and 2.12b on exceedances of World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines for two air pollutants, nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter 2.5 (PM 2.5 – particulate matter is small airborne particles, that are not gases, produced from different sources that harm air quality and cause health issues. PM 2.5 is any particles smaller than 2.5 micrometres.). The Council is aware of poor air quality in several areas of Colchester, and these are designated air quality management areas where the Council measures air quality and reports on this annually. The Council are delivering many projects to attempt to improve air quality, for example running a no idling campaign, air pollution awareness campaign, piloting eCargo bike delivery studies, running home burning awareness campaigns and more. It should also be noted that all district council's got penalty marks for question 2.12b. The data used for marking these questions is available [here](#).

Planning and Land Use

- 5.17 There were many gaps in this section, and this was reflective across all district councils. It should be noted that at the time of writing the existing Local Plan, it was based on the evidence and regulations that existed at the time of its production. At that time it was very unclear if Councils could request to build to standards above building regulations, and the evidence base for building to net zero was much less developed. Several of these

gaps in this section will look to be addressed as part of the Local Plan review. Essex County Council have been developing the evidence base to show the technical, economic and legal feasibility of asking for net zero homes as part of planning policy. The intention is that each of the local planning authorities including Colchester City Council will be able to adopt a net zero homes policy with the guidance provided by ECC. This would help address questions 3.3a, 3.3b, 3.3c and 3.9 (the latter addressed by the fact the proposed policy from ECC suggests on site renewable energy generation should match energy demand of the development). Since the assessment the Council has also produced three supplementary planning documents on climate change, active travel and biodiversity which also respond to the questions and set out higher standards for these topics, albeit standards which are therefore for guidance and cannot be used as enforcement.

- 5.18 On the back of the above, the Council would have the opportunity to address question 3.2. We currently build new Council homes to Future Homes Standard 2025 but have identified in the new climate change supplementary planning document that we expect developers to build to higher standards, specifically the Low Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) standards that outline the requirements to make a home or building net zero. This should then apply to new Council homes we build.
- 5.19 The other gaps in the assessment will be considered as part of the Local Plan review process to determine their appropriateness and feasibility.

Governance & Finance

- 5.20 There were many gaps in this section, but we are already addressing several of the questions we didn't receive marks for. For example, questions 4.3a and 4.3b are addressed by the production of the Council's Greenhouse Gas Report for financial year 2022/2023. The reason why we lost the majority of marks for these questions was because we did not clearly state the methodology we used for our emissions calculations (which is addressed with the production of the detailed greenhouse gas report that is now on the [Council's website](#)).
- 5.21 We are working on question 4.6 by adapting our invitation to tender and bidder response document to acknowledge the Council's climate emergency declaration and ask for more information from suppliers about their environmental credentials and how they are reducing environmental impacts of the relevant contract they are delivering. This has been implemented from November 2023 and relevant responses will be assessed in the new year to see how suppliers are interpreting the questions and the quality of responses given.
- 5.22 We are addressing question 4.9 to some degree by providing a 4 hour carbon literacy course to councillors, including the portfolio holders, several committee chairs and all members of the Environment and Sustainability Panel. The portfolio holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability along with the Head of Sustainability have also both attended a fully accredited carbon literacy course which took place after this assessment was completed.
- 5.23 We are aware of the gap considering the risks from climate change in our corporate risk register and this is going to be actioned on. We are also looking to take part in a Government pilot for reporting on climate adaptation at the local authority level, with support and guidance provided as part of this. This reporting may become common practice for local authorities in the future so this gives us an opportunity to get ahead with understanding the potential requirements of this.

Biodiversity

- 5.24 One of the lost marks in here are because there was a lack of public information available to justify that we met the marks. On 5.1, the compost and soil conditioner we do use is peat free and is composed of farmyard manure, therefore it is expected that we would have received this mark had this information been in the public domain. On 5.5, we did used to have a target for increasing tree cover but this was removed as part of the changes to the Woodland and Biodiversity Project to prioritise work to enhance biodiversity. Also, we do have targets for increasing canopy cover in the Local Plan, reflecting the aim for increased tree planting where appropriate across Colchester.
- 5.25 The other marks not gained were to do with implementation of biodiversity net gain (BNG). The Council has already had requirements for meeting minimum 10% BNG since July 2022 when the local plan was adopted, ahead of the mandatory introduction in January 2024. The Council has tried on several occasions to hire an ecologist for the Planning team but has been unsuccessful. ECC have now hired an officer that will help all the Essex local authorities with supporting the implementation of BNG and helping to understand BNG plans submitted by developers. The Council is not currently requiring a higher BNG threshold than the minimum 10% but this could be considered as more evidence comes out about its achievability in Essex which is being worked on by the BNG working group in the Local Nature Partnership.

Collaboration & Engagement

- 5.26 The main gap identified as part of the assessment was the lack of ongoing engagement with residents about our climate emergency action plan, and consideration on how these actions will impact residents most affected by climate change (questions 6.5a and 6.5b). As part of many of our projects such as those on sustainable travel and biodiversity, we do provide opportunities for residents to hear about our projects and get involved in supporting them to develop their own community projects through an asset based community development (ABCD) model. However, there is a gap for residents to be able to hear about and influence the whole climate emergency action plan as a whole. Any method that could be chosen to increase engagement would need to have careful thought given to ensure it is impactful and enables the community to feel empowered to take their own climate and environmental action. If recommended by councillors, the Council could look to do a review of participation initiatives conducted by other local authorities to determine suitability and effectiveness.

Waste Reduction & Food

- 5.27 This section was another low scoring section for the Council, but the Council is taking action to address some of the actions in this section. For example, in response to questions 7.1a and 7.1b, the Council is taking part in a pilot project to look at better ways to incorporate sustainable policies and asks for event providers to minimise the impact of delivering events. This will be in collaboration with Maldon District Council and Colchester Events, with the project being run by Vision 2025, the official outdoor events industry environmental steering group who have developed in draft the '[Green Events Code](#)' which aims to provide a set of best practice standards and targets for sustainability at outdoor events.
- 5.28 For questions 7.3, 7.4 and 7.4b, it is arguable that activities associated with food fall outside of the remit of the Council. Supporting this point perhaps is that only 58/186 district councils got marks for 7.3, 12/186 for 7.4a and 22/186 for 7.4b, indicating that it isn't an action many district councils are currently prioritising.

- 5.29 The only other way the Council can gain more marks on other parts of this is by increasing recycling rates and reducing residual waste production. The Council already has one of the lowest waste production levels in the UK, and notably only 1/186 local authorities got full marks for question 7.9. The Council's recycling rate is also above the average UK recycling rate, but ways to improve this will be revisited as part of the Recycling and Waste Strategy work.
- 5.30 It should be noted that on question 7.7, the Council does provide a kerbside food waste recycling collection for the majority of residents and not getting awarded a mark for this question was an error on the part of Climate Emergency UK. This has been queried and we will be getting this mark for this and the results amended appropriately soon.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

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

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 This report is about actions being taken on climate change and the environment, hence linking to the 'Respond to the climate emergency' theme of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 There are no consultation considerations of the report.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There are no publicity considerations of the report.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no financial implications of the report.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 There are no health, wellbeing and community safety implications of the 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 This report outlines the Council's performance on the Council climate action scorecards which does show the good work the Council is already doing to tackle climate change and reduce environmental impacts across the city. However, areas for improvement have been identified and comments on these have been addressed in the above report.

Appendices

Appendix A: Colchester City Council's Full Climate Action Scorecard

Appendix A: Colchester City Council's Full Climate Action Scorecard

Section: Buildings & Heating	
Question	Points scored
1.1 Has the council completed extensive retrofit work on any of its significant buildings to make them low carbon?	1/2
1.2 Are the council's operations powered by renewable energy?	0/2
1.3 Are the homes owned and managed by the council energy efficient?	2/3
1.4 Does the council have a target to retrofit all council owned and managed homes and has this been costed?	3/3
1.5 Is the council part of a programme or partnership to support home retrofitting, through providing the skills and training needed or in other ways?	0/1
1.6 Does the council have a staff member employed to work on retrofitting across the council area?	1/1
1.7 Are the homes and buildings in the council area energy efficient?	2/3
1.8 Is the council actively enforcing Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards of homes in the private rented sector?	0/2
1.9 Does the council provide a service to support private homeowners to make their homes more energy efficient?	0/1
1.10 Does the council offer funding to private renters or homeowners to retrofit their homes?	1/1
1.11 Does the council have a scheme to allow residents to purchase renewable energy cheaply, through collective buying?	2/2
1.12 Has the council supported local community renewable energy creation?	0/1
Overall score: 12/22 (45% with weighting accounted for)	

Section: Transport	
Question and tier of criteria	Points scored
2.1 What percentage of the council's fleet are electric vehicles?	1/1
2.2 Has the council set up or supported a shared transport scheme that can be used across their whole area?	4/6
2.10 Has the council supported the expansion of a public network of electric vehicle chargers?	0/2
2.11 Has the council approved, expanded or built a high carbon transport project since 2019? (Negative points question)	0/0 (no penalty points)
2.12a Do the NO2 levels in a significant proportion of neighbourhoods within Council area exceed WHO air pollution guidelines? (Negative points question)	0/0 (but penalty points received)
2.12b Do the PM 2.5 levels in a significant proportion of neighbourhoods in the council's area exceed the safe World Health Organisation (WHO) air pollution guidelines? (Negative points question)	0/0 (but penalty points received)
Overall score: 5/9 (56% with weighting accounted for)	

Section: Planning & Land use	
Question and tier of criteria	Points scored
3.1 Is the council's area wide net zero target a strategic objective of the Local Plan?	0/1
3.2 Has the council committed to building all future council owned or managed housing to a high energy efficiency or operationally net-zero standard?	0/2
3.3a Does the council require new homes to make an improvement on the Part L building regulations?	0/1
3.3b Does the council require a fabric first approach for new development?	0/1
3.3c Does the council set a requirement that all new homes to be built must be operationally (regulated) net zero?	0/2
3.4 Does the council require developers to carry out a whole life cycle carbon assessment of new build developments?	0/1
3.5 Does the council require a higher level of water efficiency for all new homes?	1/1
3.6 Has the council removed minimum parking requirements for new residential homes across their area?	0/2
3.7 Does the council include a policy in the Local Plan to create 15/20 minute neighbourhoods?	0/1
3.8 Has the council committed to avoiding new building developments on the functional flood plain?	1/1
3.9 Does the council have a minimum requirement for on-site renewable energy generation for new building development?	0/2
3.10a Does the Local Plan identify suitable areas for new solar energy, wind developments and district heat networks?	0/3
3.10b Has the Council approved any planning applications for new or expanded solar or wind developments, battery storage, or renewable district heat networks since 2019?	2/5
Overall score: 4/23 (15% with weighting accounted for)	

Section: Governance & Finance	
Question and tier of criteria	Points scored
4.1a Does the council's corporate plan include a net-zero target and make tackling the climate emergency one of its main priorities?	0/1
4.1b Does the council's medium term financial plan include the council's net zero target and make tackling the climate emergency one of its main priorities?	1/1
4.2 Has the council published a climate change risk register?	0/1
4.3a Is the council reporting on its own greenhouse gas emissions?	0/1
4.3b According to the council's own reporting, have the council's own greenhouse gas emissions reduced since 2019?	0/3
4.4 Has the council's area wide carbon emissions decreased, according to UK Government data?	1/3
4.5 Has the council adopted a new governance or decision-making process to put tackling the climate emergency at the heart of every council decision made?	1/2
4.6 Has the Council embedded climate action and waste reduction into their procurement policies?	0/3
4.7 Does the council have a Cabinet member or Portfolio Holder that has climate change explicitly in their remit?	1/1
4.8 What percentage of the council's overall staff work on implementing their Climate Action Plan or other climate change projects?	2/3
4.9 Have all senior management and councillors in the cabinet or committee chairs received climate awareness training?	0/1
4.10a Has the council raised income for climate action from property development?	1/1
4.10b Has the council launched a Climate Bond, Community Municipal Investment or equivalent?	0/1
4.10c Has the council raised income for climate action from any other sources?	1/1

4.11b Has the council's pensions fund committed to divesting from all fossil fuels?	0/2
4.12 Does the council have direct investments in airports or high carbon intensive energy industries? (Negative points question)	0/0 (no penalty points)
Overall score: 8/25 (38% with weighting accounted for)	

Section: Biodiversity	
Question and tier of criteria	Points scored
5.1 Does the council use peat free compost or soil in all landscaping and horticulture?	0/1
5.2 Has the council banned the use of pesticides on all council owned and managed land?	1/1
5.3 Has the council committed to mowing their green spaces less for wildlife?	1/1
5.5 Does the council have a target to increase tree cover and is a tree management plan agreed as they grow?	0/1
5.7 Have the council's parks been awarded Green Flag status?	1/2
5.8 Does the council employ a planning ecologist to scrutinise planning reports for biodiversity net gain?	0/1
5.9 Does the council require a higher biodiversity net gain commitment from new developments?	0/1
Overall score: 3/8 (25% with weighting accounted for)	

Section: Collaboration & Engagement	
Question and tier of criteria	Points scored
6.1 Do the council's climate pages include information about behaviour changes that residents can take, and are they easy to find?	1/1
6.2a Has the council published a climate action plan with SMART targets?	1/1
6.2b Has the council published an up to date and easy-to-read annual report on their Climate Action Plan?	2/3
6.3 Has the council lobbied the government for climate action?	0/1
6.4 Is the council working with external partners or other councils to seek to influence national governments on climate action, or to learn about and share best practice on council climate action?	1/2
6.5a Does the council have an ongoing way for residents to influence the implementation of the council's Climate Action Plan?	0/2
6.5b Does the council's ongoing engagement with residents include those most affected by climate change and climate action policy?	0/2
6.6 Does the council provide funding for community climate action, for example through an environment fund or climate action fund?	1/1
6.8 Is the council working in partnership with cultural institutions and organisations to encourage decarbonisation within culture and arts locally?	1/1
6.9 Is the council working in partnership with schools or other education settings to deliver climate action that young people can engage with?	1/1
6.10 Is the council working in partnership with local businesses to encourage decarbonisation?	1/1
6.11 Has the council passed a motion to ban high carbon advertising?	0/1
Overall score: 9/16 (54% with weighting accounted for)	

Section: Waste Reduction & Food	
Question and tier of criteria	Points scored
7.1a Has the council banned or reduced single use plastic in its buildings and events?	0/1
7.1b Has the council reduced single use plastic at external events on council land, property or public spaces such as roads and parks?	0/2
7.2 Has the council taken steps to support a circular economy locally?	0/1
7.3 Does the council support initiatives to redistribute surplus food waste?	0/1
7.4a Does the council have a sustainable food strategy?	0/1
7.4b Is the council part of a sustainable food partnership?	0/1
7.5 Has the council taken steps to support local food growing?	1/1
7.7 Does the council provide kerbside food waste recycling?	0/1 (to be amended shortly after this was queried)
7.8 How high is the councils' area wide annual recycling rate?	1/3
7.9 How low is the councils' area wide level of household waste produced?	1/2
Overall score: 3/14 (17% with weighting accounted for)	

6 December 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 21 September 2023.

1.2 Key highlights include:

- The Council has launched a [new webpage](#) that will detail how residents who are eligible for **energy efficiency grants** can apply for these.
- The Council is providing the opportunity for residents to **hire pay as you go electric and electric cargo bikes**. These are available to hire from the secure bike hub, with a current hire price of £3 for 2 hours, or £10 for the day.
- The Council has now published its **finalised Greenhouse Gas Report** for financial year 2022/23, with greenhouse gas emissions totalling 5547.28 tonnes of CO₂e. This shows a small decrease of 2.6% in emissions compared with financial year 2021/22, and an overall 10.5% decrease in emissions since the 2018/19 financial year set as the Council's emissions baseline.
- The Council has made a bid for funding to round 2 of the Swimming Pool Support Fund to support **capital energy efficiency and decarbonisation improvements at Leisure World Colchester**. The bid included the request for funding to install LED lighting, solar PV, pool covers and more.
- The Council **received a score of 34% in the Council Climate Action Scorecards**, scoring above the district average of 29%. The scorecards are discussed in detail in an accompanying report at this meeting.
- The Council has **updated its invitation to tender (ITT) and bidder response documents** to include more information about the climate emergency within these documents, alongside asking suppliers for more information about their environmental credentials and ways they are mitigating the environmental impact of the contract they are delivering.
- The Council has introduced an **online learning course on environmental awareness** for staff to learn more about climate change and the ways they could lower their environmental impact. A member training course is also being put together for delivery in early 2024.
- 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

Energy Efficiency grants

- 5.1 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. Several energy efficiency grant opportunities that residents might be eligible for are now advertised on here. The Council has been advertising the grants through a series of in-person pop-up events in different locations across Colchester and these have been advertised through local community groups and parish councils. Letters for the Home Upgrade Grant have also been sent to potentially eligible properties encouraging residents to apply.

Pay as you go ebike and eCargo bike hire opens

- 5.2 Residents can now hire a range of ebikes and eCargo bikes on a pay as you go basis from the secure bike hub in the city centre. Bikes are available to hire from a minimum current price of £3 for 2 hours, up to £10 for a full day hire. The Council is also working with the community where a group of residents are setting up a community bike hub for residents to use ebikes and eCargo bikes on a pay as you go basis from Old Heath Recreation Ground.

Greenhouse Gas Report published

- 5.3 The Council has published its Greenhouse Gas Report, detailing greenhouse gas emissions figures for financial year 2022/23. The total emissions recorded were 5547.28 tonnes of CO₂e, which reflects a reduction in 2.6% since financial year 2021/22 and a 10.5% reduction when compared to the baseline financial year of 2018/19. At the next Panel meeting, further actions the Council aims to take to reduce emissions across its estate will be presented. The Greenhouse Gas report is available to view on the [Council's website](#).

Swimming Pool Support Fund bid

- 5.4 The Council has made a bid into phase 2 of the Swimming Pool Support Fund administered by Sport England for funding to install energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures at Leisure World Colchester. Measures included in the application were for rooftop solar PV, LED lighting, water filtration system, pool covers, a new air handling unit with heat recovery and smart motors. The outcome of the bid will be determined by late 2023/early 2024.

Council Climate Action Scorecards

- 5.5 The Council has received its Council Climate Action Scorecard as part of the assessment completed of all local authorities in the UK. The Council scored 34% on the assessment, above the district Council average of 29%. A full review of this assessment is provided in an accompanying report on the agenda.

Procurement and Sustainability

- 5.6 The Council has made alterations to its invitation to tender and bidder response documents that companies must fill out when tendering for a contract opportunity. Information has been added about the Council's climate emergency declaration and the importance of this in regard to companies we want to work with. An additional question asking about the company's environmental impact and how it will mitigate the environmental impact of the contract it is delivering has also been included. Analysis of responses will take place in the new year to determine effectiveness and improvements will look to be made to make consideration of environmental impacts a stronger part of the procurement process.

Staff and Member training

- 5.7 An online learning course has been developed for staff on environmental awareness. The course includes content on an introduction to climate change and its impacts, the co-benefits of tackling climate change, the role of local authorities (and specifically Colchester City Council) in responding to climate change, information on carbon footprints and how staff can take action in their personal and work lives to reduce their environmental impact. A carbon literacy course is also being developed for councillors which is being rolled out in early 2024.

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 hub, as well as for staff to use any of the Council's electric and electric cargo bikes. Find out [more information](#), including the [registration form for sessions here](#).

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 This report has no equality, diversity and human rights implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 All of the updates provided in this report contribute to the Strategic Plan 2023-2026 theme of 'Respond to the climate emergency'.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 There are no consultation considerations for this paper, although several of the projects referenced have consultation elements within them and success in tackling climate change will involve engagement and education of others to influence behaviour change more widely.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

10.1 There are no direct financial implications of the updates provided in this report.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

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

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

12. Health and Safety Implications

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

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 There are no risk management implications from this update.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

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



Environment and Sustainability Panel

Item
11

06 December 2023

Report of	Assistant Director Corporate and Improvement Services	Author	Matthew Evans ☎ ext. 8006
Title	Work Programme 2023-2024		
Wards affected	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.
- 2.2 The attention of the Panel is drawn to the changes which have been made to the programme which are detailed in this report, and which relate to items which have been moved from this meeting to the meetings of the Panel in the new year.

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

Environment and Sustainability Panel
Meeting date / Agenda items -
Environment and Sustainability Panel - 22 June 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview/Introduction of Climate Emergency Action Plan and key progress. 2. Climate Emergency Action Plan – progress update.
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 20 July 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Progress Update
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 21 September 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve Improvements 2. Woodland and Biodiversity update 3. Greenhouse gas report review 4. Climate Emergency Action Plan update
Environment and Sustainability Panel – 06 December 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Essex Climate Action Commission update 2. Domestic Energy Efficiency Funding and Support 3. Climate Change Scorecards 4. Climate Emergency Action Plan update

Environment and Sustainability Panel – **08 February 2024**

1. Housing and Sustainability
2. Review of fleet transition – moved from December 2023 meeting
3. Carbon Management Plan – moved from December 2023 meeting
4. Climate Emergency Action Plan update

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

1. Air Quality Projects update
2. Active and Sustainable Travel projects update
3. Draft Recycling and Waste Strategy – moved from December 2023 meeting
4. Ferry Marsh Update