

20th November 2019

Report of	Assistant Director of Environment	Author	Richard Block
Title	Climate Emergency Update		☎ 506476
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information and an update regarding the progress in developing a roadmap to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by full Council in July 2019. It also sets out a timetable for future reports.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the actions taken and the progress made by The Task and Finish Group.
- 2.2 To resolve that Environmental and Carbon Management issues should be considered in all future decisions taken by the Council.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To ensure Cabinet has oversight of the steps being taken to respond to the Climate Emergency and the future proposed timetable for bringing more detailed proposals back to Cabinet and full Council.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. Background Information

- 5.1 In July 2019 the Council unanimously approved a motion to declare a climate emergency. Council also resolved to:

Support the newly formed Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group to consider the following actions:

Commission an environmental audit which identifies pollution hotspots, wildlife biodiversity and environmental health issues, and an urban impact assessment with an aim to identify areas of improvement across the borough.

Consult expert opinions in the field, as appropriate.

Collaborate with regional and neighbouring local authorities, as well as communities, to encourage practical measures to reduce emissions, reduce carbon footprints and develop community-based renewable energy projects.

Encourage all sectors of the economy across the borough to take steps to reduce waste and become carbon neutral.

Develop a roadmap for Colchester Borough Council to go carbon neutral by 2030. Report to Cabinet and Full Council within six months with an action plan setting out conservation and environmental sustainability goals to address targets by 2030; incorporating proposals on the investment implications of this proposed activity.

Pledge to ensure future housing and community development projects meet a carbon-neutral standard by 2030

Call upon the Leader of the Council to write to the Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth requesting that national policy is urgently developed to reflect the seriousness of the current emergency, and to release funds to local authorities, encouraging them to take the necessary measures at local level.

- 5.2 Since the motion was approved immediate steps have been taken and these are detailed later in this report. In addition, work has progressed to deliver key programmes of work or projects such as the planned launch of the Colchester Woodland Project which will involve planting over 200,000 trees, one for every resident of the Borough which will offset 37,000 tonnes of carbon.
- 5.3 The Council's previous work to improve environmental sustainability has also been recognised. Friends of the Earth recently published their list of the most climate friendly areas in England & Wales with Colchester rated joint third overall.
- 5.4 The Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group has also been exploring further the steps required to respond to the Climate Emergency with the aim of providing a full report with proposals to Cabinet in January 2020 so recommendations can be made to full Council in February 2020.
- 5.5 It cannot be stated strongly enough that to meet the ambition of the motion by 2030 will be incredibly challenging. In particular, the ambition to achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2030. It is not yet clear whether it is an achievable goal, and it may prove to be impossible,

however, it is an ambition the Council is prepared to pursue in good faith and in endeavouring to achieve the goal will take us further toward a sustainable and carbon neutral economy for Colchester than backing away from such a challenge.

- 5.6 The Council has made significant reductions in carbon through previous carbon reduction strategies. In 2008 we signed up to a 5-year strategy making a commitment to reduce carbon emissions in Council buildings by 25% by 2012. This was successful with the target being exceeded and 35% cut in carbon emissions recorded.
- 5.7 In 2015 the Council embarked on the development of a new plan for 2016-2020 with the aim to cut the carbon baseline emissions of 6533 tCO₂ by a further 40% and excellent progress has been made in achieving this.
- 5.8 Despite starting from a strong position the evidence available shows that the scale of change needed to achieve carbon neutrality will be unprecedented. Making further carbon reductions becomes increasingly difficult and costly with all previously considered viable actions having been taken.
- 5.9 To assist with this work the Carbon Trust have been commissioned to conduct a thorough qualitative analysis and review of the Council's work to date, produce a baseline and footprint for all Council assets and operations, provide a report for areas of focus for future carbon reduction activities, synthesize clear actions and strategic recommendations that will enable roadmap modelling moving forward and a basis for overall strategy development. The timeline for this is underway with a final report due in December. The process will also involve workshops and meetings with all key stakeholders.
- 5.10 Taking in to account the timescale required for the Carbon Trust to complete their work and the progress made, it is proposed that a full report is made to Cabinet in January 2020 so recommendations can be made to full Council in February 2020.
- 5.11 This initial report is the first milestone in what will be a 10 year journey, acknowledging that further planning work is required to provide a robust and evidence based plan for tackling the biggest challenges. We also know that, if we want to be successful, wider engagement with communities, businesses, schools, public sector partners, the voluntary sector and others will be critical in gaining input to and support for our collective programme. We are aware of growing public support for environmental action and this has been exemplified by XR's People's Assembly & Festival and the work of Eco Colchester who have both fed in ideas to the Task & Finish Group.
- 5.12 It is also vital that any decision now taken by the Council has consideration of the impact on Carbon and the Environment. This includes procurement decisions so the considerable spending power the Council has via external contracts secures carbon reduction and other environmental improvements.
- 5.13 The table below provides updates against each of the different requirements of the Council Motion:

Climate Emergency Target	Update on progress
Audit of pollution hotspots and environmental health issues.	A full audit of pollution hotspots has been undertaken as part of our air quality management activity. Hot spot areas have been identified and continue to be

	<p>monitored. As a result of the action taken to tackle air pollution in Colchester additional Government funding has been secured to deliver a two year behaviour change project to tackle levels of pollution in the borough.</p> <p>We also have full details of all potentially polluting processes and the controls they have in place through Environmental Permitting.</p>
Audit of Wildlife/Biodiversity	<p>Several specialist groups already undertake such audits. These will be assessed to identify whether any gaps exist. Where this is the case a further audit will be engaged. An early example of action is the review of weed control on land owned by the Council including phasing out the use of Glyphosate based weed killer. A paper setting out the information currently held and identifying where other sources of data can be found will be attached as an appendix.</p>
Urban Impact Assessment	<p>The local plan and resulting significant decisions all require a substantial impact assessment. A key proposal moving forward will be the introduction of 'sustainability in all policies', with environmental and sustainability impact assessments introduced as a standard consideration for all key decisions.</p>
Consult expert opinions in the field	<p>Several experts have been consulted or have attended the task and finish group including the Carbon Trust, Eco Colchester. Feedback has also been considered from Extinction Rebellion Colchester.</p>
Collaborate with regional and neighbouring local authorities, as well as communities	<p>Joint transport strategy/projects to facilitate increased cycling and walking are being developed with Essex County Council. Community activation, social movements and active travel are the primary means by which the Council aims to increase levels of physical activity through the Local Delivery Pilot a significant piece of work involving a wide range of stakeholders. We have also approached Essex County Council about joint working on tree planting and will be working closely with Parish Councils and community groups on this project. We are also investigating further work and community based schemes to enable greater use of renewable energy.</p>

Encourage all sectors of the economy across the borough to take steps to reduce waste and become carbon neutral.	Work has continued with the Single Use Plastic reduction campaign across the Borough. The refill campaign has also been publicised and supported through the introduction of 5 new/refurbished public water fountains. A review of our trade waste collection service is also being undertaken to develop additional commercial recycling collections.
Develop a roadmap for Colchester Borough Council to go carbon neutral by 2030.	The Carbon Trust have been commissioned to undertake a carbon foot printing exercise and to identify the key areas of focus that will form the basis of a roadmap and strategy for Colchester to be carbon neutral.
Report to Cabinet and Full Council within six months with an action plan setting out conservation and environmental sustainability goals to address targets by 2030; incorporating proposals on the investment implications of this proposed activity.	This report is the first stage of reporting. A full report is scheduled for Cabinet in January 2020 for recommendation to full Council in February 2020.
Pledge to ensure future housing and community development projects meet a carbon-neutral standard by 2030.	<p>A report has been presented to the Task and Finish group outlining the measures CBC are already undertaking through planning and a table of new suggested measures that are recommended to enhance the delivery of sustainable development. This table of new measures is currently being prioritised in readiness for further discussion.</p> <p>Building regulations provide the most robust way of ensuring new housing is carbon neutral. The Council will respond to consultations to improve the Building Regulations and should lobby central government to ensure they aim for Carbon Neutrality. This will then enable us to enforce the requirement and will ensure all development is to a common Carbon Neutral standard.</p>
Call upon the Leader of the Council to write to the Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth requesting that national policy is urgently developed to reflect the seriousness of the current emergency, and to release funds to local authorities, encouraging them to take the necessary measures at local level.	This letter was sent, and a response received.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 There will be no equality, diversity and human rights implications in undertaking this work.

7. Strategic Plan

- 7.1 Activity to meet the requirements of the Climate Change Motion could potentially deliver against all streams of the Strategic Plan.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Several experts and interest groups have been consulted and will continue to be consulted through this work.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There are currently no publicity considerations although it will be important to publicise how we will respond to the climate emergency once the proposed responses are adopted by full Council.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 An initial budget of £50K has been allocated for this priority but this will be used to carry out the scoping work referred to above and to provide additional officer resource to take this work forward. Further funds are available to accelerate progress where necessary an example being significant investment in the Colchester Woodland Project this year.
- 10.2 There are likely to be considerable additional financial implications associated with responding to the Climate Emergency albeit there may also be opportunities to partially mitigate these through other policies and associated financial savings e.g. energy costs. These will need to be considered when recommendations are made to Cabinet and Council in the new year. Even then it will be difficult to set out clear and actual costs for the next 10 years at this stage. As such resourcing the roadmap will likely need to take a phased approach in terms of capital and revenue funding in the short to medium term.

11. Community Safety and Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 11.1 Responding to the Climate Emergency will have positive impacts on health and wellbeing through tackling areas such as air quality. There are also many health and wellbeing benefits associated with possible solutions such as increased cycling and walking instead of car use.

12 Health and Safety

- 12.1 There are no health and safety implications at this stage.

13 Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 The motion approved by Council sets ambitious targets and without robust prioritisation and risk management they will be difficult to achieve. Effective programme management will need to be utilised to ensure targets are achieved.

- 13.2 Meeting the requirements of this motion will not be achieved through Council action alone and is a highly complex issue. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in particular will require systems leadership across multiple sectors, communications and behavioural change that will result in adapted lifestyles, and potentially fundamentally different patterns of development and travel in the long term. Ultimately perceptions of success will need to evolve over time. Our emergent programmes will be related to the degree of control and influence the Council directly has and our acknowledgement that partnership working across the region will be essential for us to address the challenge.
- 13.3 There are mixed perceptions of climate change within communities across Colchester that manifest into a spectrum of views which the Council are expected to navigate in the development of the roadmap, the prioritisation of resource and communication to our residents.
- 13.4 The resourcing requirements to undertake systems leadership and the change programme required will be significant. The scale of change required is unprecedented.