

Report to Council 23rd February 2021

Cllr Louise Pepper, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Green Issues: Equalities

Strategic Projects

The Council has made excellent progress with its corporate **Climate Crisis Strategy** and the **Interim Climate Change Planning Policies**. Both were well received by Scrutiny Committee in January and have now been endorsed by Cabinet on 9th February. The **Climate Crisis Strategy** still needs to be endorsed by Full Council as it is a corporate strategy, so I hope that you will all support this key document at tonight's meeting.

The **Climate Crisis Strategy** sets out our corporate aims and objectives to address climate change over the next 10 years plus. This Strategy will be accompanied by a detailed **Action Plan** which will set out how we will implement the various corporate projects to deliver our **Climate Crisis Strategy**. In doing this, I am determined to work closely with local residents and community groups as well as Essex County Council, businesses and developers to agree and implement the projects we need to change how we plan and shape our beautiful towns and villages. I am pleased to say that now funding has been identified to deliver the climate change agenda and we will soon be advertising for a new Climate Change Project Officer to lead on the delivery of the **Strategy and Action Plan**. We will buy in expertise and professional advice on how the money will be spent.

A key practical way of doing this will be to implement the **Climate Change Planning Policies** we have now agreed. Although they do not carry the weight of statutory planning policies in an adopted Local Plan, they send a very clear message to all developers that Uttlesford is serious about tackling climate change and meeting its 2030 net zero target. The policies will be used to help shape new developments, especially at the pre-planning application stage, when officers set out our corporate expectations to prospective applicants. In formalising these important policies, I am particularly pleased to have worked closely with Essex County Council (ECC) and have its full support for our policies and look forward to working with members and officers at ECC on future climate change initiatives.

Specific Projects and Initiatives

UDC Tree Planting Initiative 2020-2021.

All town and parish councils in the district have been invited to submit tree planting proposals for assistance under the UDC Tree Planting Initiative 2020-21. Seven participating councils are receiving trees for their planting schemes. These are

Clavering, Felsted, Great Chesterford, Hadstock, Saffron Walden, Thaxted, and Wendens Ambo. Additionally, tree planting is being carried out on UDC open spaces in Gt. Dunmow, Hatfield Heath, Thaxted, and Saffron Walden. Additional funding of up to £7,000 for tree planting has been secured from Essex County Council for the current planting.

Green Champions have also been rolled out to all town and parish councils to engage local communities to find ways to lower their carbon footprint and help support and protect their local biodiversity.

Energy Related Matters

There has rather inevitably, been a limited uptake to schemes as residents not keen on visitors to homes during lockdown and may be shielding as well as limitations due to risk assessments of installers.

- Energy Switching – next auction February (October take-up figures not yet available)
- ECO and ECO FLEX schemes for boilers and insulation - limited ability to deliver with lockdown so progressing slowly
- Warm Homes Fund – 2 installs to date, again limited uptake by residents because of lockdown and installer restrictions
- Green Homes Grant – giving advice to residents
- Green Homes Grant – boiler and insulation local authority scheme – no installs to date (funding for 14 properties available) again limited uptake by residents because of lockdown
- OLEV bid for Electric Vehicle charging posts at White Street Great Dunmow, Chequers Lane Gt Dunmow, Crafton Green Stansted car parks has the green light, discussions with bid team is now finalised and £105,000 has been secured (75% OLEV and 25% for BT Charger).

Waste Recycling Matters

At least 58% of household waste collected in the week after Christmas was recycled, which was about 8% more than average.

With more people staying at home more and changing their buying habits, the crews also saw a big increase in the amount of waste produced in the build-up to Christmas.

Changes were made to the usual bin schedule over the festive period to overcome some operational issues and ensure that the collection crews could enjoy a well-earned rest. During the catch-up period the crews worked hard to collect over 275 tonnes of food waste and just over 700 tonnes of recyclable materials.

Since the first national lockdown in March 2020, the nature and volume of waste produced has changed, with notable increases in the amount of glass and cardboard being presented for collection. Like other areas, Uttlesford has seen growth in the overall amount of waste being produced.

In the last financial year, the latest period for when annual data is available, Uttlesford residents recycled the largest percentage of 'dry' recycling – such as cardboard, cans, glass, paper and plastics – in Essex, ensuring that just over half the waste produced was recycling or composted.

Air Quality Matters

As a consequence of the reduction in traffic resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is no surprise that pollution levels have fallen across the district. It is expected that there will be no exceedances of air quality objectives for 2020.