

**Councillor Louise Pepper,**

**Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Green Issues; Equalities**

**Full Council, 20 July 2021**

## **Climate Change:**

### Surface transport

Surface transport is responsible for 70% of our carbon emissions as a district.

Of this, 47% is the M11, 20% is on A roads, and 25% is on minor roads.

For our own fleet and vehicle use, data is being compiled across the organisation. A review by the Energy Saving Trust has been booked, which will produce bespoke recommendations for our organisation. This review is free of charge and impartial, the EST is Government funded.

For the district as a whole, officers are working closely with ECC and exploring all possibilities for reducing traffic by encouraging a shift to active travel, reducing unnecessary pollution caused by unavoidable traffic, and supporting the transition to low emission vehicles. There are a number of sub-measures and projects within each of these broad categories, which include establishing targets that are reasonable without sacrificing ambition, and delivery models and mechanisms.

*Associated departments: Planning Policy, Environmental Health*

### Domestic energy

Housing energy use is responsible for 18% of our carbon emissions as a district.

Officers are exploring all possibilities in terms of grants for retrofit.

The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme 2 (LAD2) has £249,000 allocated for Uttlesford. The distribution organisation is setting up the supply chain network and councils will be able to put forward suggestions for targeting the funds. One option would be to target the Private Rented Sector (without necessarily excluding others) as this would support landlords to upgrade their properties ahead of future legislative changes on minimum EPC standards for rental properties.

This would in turn support a new grant application for up to £100,000 to support enforcement and compliance with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for Landlords, by demonstrating an holistic approach to the sector by the UDC, which is the responsible authority for enforcing MEES.

Later this year a Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund will be opening for applications, which can be used for our own stock and Housing Association stock.

Later this summer, LAD3 and the Homes Upgrades funds will be open to applications.

*Associated departments: Environmental Health, Housing / Norse*

## Industry and commerce

Industry and commerce are responsible for 15% of our carbon emissions as a district. 46% is electricity and 21% is gas.

While much of this category sits outside the policy and project levers available to UDC, a project is being explored with an EU-funded academic group to consider the feasibility of installing solar panels widely across the district, including on commercial premises. Other ideas will be explored in due course.

Within the capabilities of UDC, we will be exploring possibilities to work alongside parishes to upgrade their community buildings. Grant funding will be pursued wherever possible.

*Associated departments: Economic development, Environmental Health*

## Waste and recycling

While not associated with a specific carbon footprint, a number of projects are being explored on the topic of waste and recycling.

*Associated departments: Environmental Services*

## Land Use and Forestry

Land use and forestry removes 3% of our district's carbon emissions from the atmosphere. Locations for tree planting and other biodiversity projects are being explored. An online district-wide citizen science research project is to be launched in the next few weeks and we hope that Members will help us to advertise this amongst interested voluntary groups in their wards. A series of seminars will be arranged when the programme is online.

## Solar farm applications

**Solar Farm planning policy** The planning policy team is drafting an SPD on solar farm planning policy, and in the interim is taking reference from national best practice, which includes Chelmsford's SPD on solar farms.

**Academic study – large-scale solar farm locations** An academic study is being carried out by a Masters Degree student on a multi-criteria decision analysis framework for the location of large-scale solar farms (3MW upwards). This study will be taking into account analysis of the past 10 years of case law, as well as other industry data, and is set to have an holistic national focus. This will aid in the decision-making process for all LAs including Uttlesford. The project is being supervised by academics at the Global Sustainability Institute at Anglia Ruskin University, and preliminary findings are being shared with Uttlesford as the project progresses.

**Academic study – micro solar energy generation** Officers are exploring the options for an academic study which would consider the technical feasibility of a potential scenario in which solar panels are installed on existing buildings in Uttlesford, and the contribution this could make to national renewable energy generation. A third party

has come forward to propose this study which has European research funding already available for it, and a formal research proposal is awaited from this group.

*Associated departments: Planning Policy*

## Work placement students

Two work placement students from Saffron Walden County High will be joining us for a week. They will be assisting the Climate Change Project Officer to make progress on some active projects.

## Open-door climate surgery

The Climate Change Officer will be arranging an open-door drop-in session for Members who are interested in particular detail on specific projects. Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July 10am – 11am is proposed. This could be arranged on an on-going basis if it proves to be useful to Members.

## Presentation

The Climate Change Officer gave a presentation on behalf of UDC to the Essex County Council Planning Portfolio and Senior Officers quarterly meeting, on the subject of *Built Environment- why, what and how: Towards Net Zero Carbon and Climate Change Resilience- Update*. Updates were provided on some of Uttlesford's climate projects and the presentation was well received.

## Equalities:

The Equalities Officer, Kerry Vinton, did a fantastic job of organising our first **Community Listening Event** and Cllr Pepper is happy for Kerry and Fiona Gardiner to take these events forward and she will support it. The Equalities team are putting together a work plan for the year which will include the listening events. They intend speaking with Hayley who facilitated the first event, to confirm her availability. They want to book in 8 further listening sessions to cover each of the 9 protected characteristics, although they won't all necessarily be in the same format. They would be looking to **hold the next one in August** and then at regular intervals from there, again depending on Hayley's availability. They also need to find the budget to take this forward.

They are also planning further training which they would like to ensure that ALL Councillors attended training as this is important and does cost the council money. They are also continuing to develop the staff networking group.

On April 30<sup>th</sup>, Cllr Pepper held a virtual zoom meeting to discuss feedback on our Community Listening Event with some of our **Independent Oversight Panel members** (Samantha Naik was also a speaker). Cllr Pepper asked a number of questions and their answers were circulated to all councillors and panel members.

Cllr Pepper is working with Samantha Naik to start up an '**Equalities Community Book Club**' where a panel and interested community members can review books of

interest on the black community (reviews could be circulated to local libraries and schools).

A Diversity Day was held at Saffron Walden County High School on Thursday June 17<sup>th</sup>. There was a lot of variety for students to enjoy (learning about facts & statistics on racism and participating in racial roleplay, lectures on racial inequality, Bollywood dance, ethnic artwork, learning about where different food is grown and what type of food is eaten and international food was served at lunchtime). It was a thoroughly enjoyable event.