

Committee: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 2nd March
2023

Title: Climate Change Action Plan – Update Report

**Portfolio
Holder:** Councillor Louise Pepper

**Report
Author:** Vicky Reed, Climate Change, Lead Officer

Summary

1. Uttlesford District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and we have pledged to take local action to prevent a climate and ecological catastrophe through the development of practices and policies which aim to achieve netzero carbon status by 2030 and to protect and enhance biodiversity in the district.
2. This Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) was approved by Cabinet on 11 January 2022 and incorporated feedback from this Committee.
3. The new Lead Officer for Climate Change started in post on 28 September 2022 to take forward the council's CCAP, in addition to delivery of the Saffron Walden Clean Air Project which will be implemented over the next two years.
4. Recruitment to replace the previous Climate Change Project Officer role to support this work was completed early this year.
5. This highlight report and APPENDIX 1 both provide the Scrutiny Committee with an update on the actions due to be completed during the 2022/23 financial year.

Recommendations

6. To note progress on the implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan set out below and contained within APPENDIX 1.
7. To note highlights, arising issues, follow-on actions, and a forward plan proposed by the Climate Change, Lead Officer.

Financial Implications

8. The Council has already agreed a specific climate change budget of £1,000,000 budget over 3 years.
9. To date a total of £344,339 of the climate Change budget has been committed or spent. In addition, an allocation of £300,000 has been made to provide grants for community projects that will deliver on the Council's climate action priorities, via the Zero Carbon Communities Fund.

10. External funding totalling over £1,700,000 has also been secured.

Background Papers

11. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:

- The Council Climate Action Strategy and Climate Action Plan.
- Littlebury Village Community Energy Project Report which is available to download [here](#).

Impact

12.

Communication/Consultation	The Climate Change Action Plan has been reviewed by the Energy and Climate Change Working Group. The proposed model that will deliver the Zero Carbon Communities grant fund has also been reviewed by this group.
Community Safety	
Equalities	Scoping undertaken for climate action projects will consider the needs of all groups in the community.
Health and Safety	
Human Rights/Legal Implications	
Sustainability	A clear plan setting out Uttlesford district council's approach to addressing climate change will have a positive impact on sustainability issues.
Ward-specific impacts	
Workforce/Workplace	

Situation

Climate Change Programme Management

13. The Climate Change Action Plan has 38 components. There are expectations described in the Climate Change Action Plan for each action point. It was noted within the published plan that these expectations were provided in outline only, and it was accepted that the timelines for some objectives may be subject to change.
14. This update report focuses on the actions that were due to be completed during the financial year April 2022-March 2023 and beyond. Of the 38 actions, 9 are marked as complete, and 7 are delayed in commencing. For almost all actions there are subsequent follow-on actions or activities, which need to be further scoped and monitored, against the overall objectives of the Climate Change Action Plan.
15. In Q4 the Climate Change, Lead Officer has proposed to undertake a review of the Climate Change Action Plan including achievements to date, issues and risks, and lessons learnt.
16. The key output of this review will be to agree an updated approach with the Council Corporate Management Team, to create a revised Climate Change Action Plan for 2023/24. It is proposed that this revised action plan is also considered by the Scrutiny Committee at an early stage.

Highlight Report (March 2022)

District Wide De-carbonisation

(Actions 4 and 20)

17. Littlebury Village Community Energy Kickstart Project is complete. The project report with suggested next steps has been published. This project surveyed carbon emissions and energy usage in the community, and reviewed housing archetypes and the potential for retrofit.
18. A plan is now in early development to consider how the Council can support a 'cluster' of community energy projects. It costs on average £5k for a community energy 'kickstart' project the size of Littlebury Village. Community Energy South have confirmed they would look to match fund this. Note this cost is for a kickstart project only which would undertake energy and housing surveys to commence engagement within the communities.
19. Other next steps include consideration of an option to provide an retrofit assessor who could be trained locally and sit within Saffron Walden Community Energy, subject to funding.

Transport Emissions: Active Travel

(Actions 5, 14, 15, 29, 30)

20. The procurement process has commenced for the Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The preferred consultant/bidder will be appointed by the end of December 2022. There is an arising risk that budget allocated will not deliver all outcomes contained in the project brief. Essex County

Council have no budget for this project. This study is due to complete by July 2023.

21. Essex County Highways Panel have allocated funding for the 'Great Chesterford to Saffron Walden Cycleway' (design), and for 'Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden - New footway'. The Highways panel are also due to deliver a feasibility study for a number of Saffron Walden cycle schemes arising from requests submitted by the Saffron Walden Town Council.
22. The Saffron Walden Clean Air Project is due to pilot active travel schemes which it may be possible to replicate elsewhere in the district. In phase 1 of the project, due for completion between Autumn 2022 and Summer 2023 the activities and milestones include: resident and business stakeholder engagement; agreeing an approach to commissioning e-transport schemes; and the launch of the Saffron Walden Town eCargo bike scheme.
23. Dialogue has commenced with the Strategic Highways Team and the Council Planning team, to explore how we can best influence the pre-application planning stage for housing developments, with the objective that Council expectations for active travel infrastructure needs are made clear to developers at the outset. Dialogue is ongoing about how to influence and inform other planning process, including Section 106 agreements. There is currently a lack of assurance that existing mechanisms can deliver the active travel infrastructure that is needed in the district.
24. A study has been commissioned to explore options for links between the Flich Way and the south side of Bishop's Stortford, Stansted Airport and Start Hill and improved links into Great Dunmow.
25. Further work is needed by the Climate Change, Lead Officer working with Planning Officers, to fully scope out the different active travel actions and work streams in the Climate Change Action Plan, which cover infrastructure, micro-mobility schemes, and behaviour change.

Domestic Energy - Government and Energy Company Grants (Action 33)

26. The Sustainable Warmth (LAD3/HUG1) government grant scheme will finish in March 2023. We have recently released some funding to Uttlesford CAB, who have resource available to deliver focused promotion of the scheme to eligible residents between now and the end of December.
27. Progress with referrals made within Uttlesford is being made and the latest figures are below:
 - Households Referred: 156
 - Surveys Completed: 77
 - Surveys Booked: 10
 - Measures Allocated: 176

- Measures Installed: 65

28. Approximately 37% of measures have been installed to date, and the Essex wide consortium assure us that they continue to work to grow the supply chain, with further installers coming on board.

29. Promotion for the current Sustainable Warmth scheme stopped on 31st December 2022 to allow time (3 months) to progress applications to installations.

30. The Sustainable Warmth grant scheme will be replaced by HUG2 which is due to commence in April 2023 and finish March 2025. The Council will be bidding for funding through the Essex wide consortium. Focus will remain on targeting low income/fuel poverty homes, with off-gas grid for heating. It has been confirmed that any off-gas grid referrals we have already received that cannot be actioned under the current scheme closing in March, can be transferred to the new scheme (if we are successful with the Essex wide consortia bid).

Zero Carbon Communities Fund

31. Members will be aware that round1 the Zero Carbon Communities Fund was launched in Autumn 2023 and commits £150,000 of funding to local initiatives.

32. In this first round, applications for grants have been invited under three themes:

- 1) Carbon Emission Reduction
- 2) Biodiversity Restoration and Enhancement
- 3) Community Engagement in Climate Change

33. 20 bids were received from groups and these have now been evaluated and the final decision on which projects to fund will be taken at Cabinet on 16 March.

34. The grant provides an opportunity for the Council to commence an ongoing programme of community engagement on climate action. Along with a regular newsletter, we will implement dedicated project pages and resources on the Let's Talk platform, in addition to further webinars to share learning from the projects funded by the grant.

Risk Analysis

35.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Gap in programme staff resources, leading to reduced capacity to deliver	2	2	Appointment to Project Officer post due end of November.

CCAP and commence SW Clean Air Project			Request made to DEFRA for 6mth extension to SW Clean Air project.
Lack of detailed scoping and clarity of outcomes for climate change actions which may lead to projects being delivered that do not contribute to the achievement of Council net zero carbon targets and/ or climate change objectives.	3	3	Review of current action plan to be completed in early 2023 in order to scope and validate existing actions, and to agree a revised action plan for 23/24, along with success measures and monitoring plan.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.