

## **Councillor Reeve, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change**

### **Report to Full Council 5 December 2023**

**This report reflects the highlights of the Portfolio from Early October to Late November 2023**

A general activity has been to absorb the Regulation 18 Consultation on the Local Plan.

I have attended various meetings of the Herts and Essex Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) which aims to improve our digital connectivity. This includes chairing the Digital Sustainability Special Interest Group.

Regular scheduled meetings are being held with Officers. Cllr Pavitt is invited to those that address biodiversity matters.

Below are summaries of some key activities of the Environmental Services, Climate Change, and Biodiversity, and Air Quality work.

#### **Environmental Services**

The main strategic activity is that the Director is developing the medium (and long) term strategy to address the resource issues in the Waste Collection service.

ECC Waste Strategy 2024-2054: The Consultation for this has ended on 22 Nov 2023.

Recycling Centre Bookings: The ECC Consultation on this ended mid-Nov 2023. The results of this are awaited. Note Uttlesford are in a small minority regarding proposed changes, since most Local Authorities are reporting severe queuing and other problems.

Landfill site, South of the Flich way on the border of Great and Little Canfield: As previously reported, there are a number of open enforcement issues relating to this site. There are also a range of Authorities/Agencies involved. Coordination of the various bodies is improving. The Environment Agency has issued an External Briefing Note dated August 2023 requiring the Landowner to take certain actions, including securing the boundary fence against public access. It has been brought to the attention of the Health and Safety Executive. Apparently, the fence is now secure, but this is being checked.

The Environmental Health team is checking the status of a new 'Animal Sanctuary' that is causing disturbance to its neighbours.

The next meeting of the Essex Waste Partnership - Member Advisory Board will be held on 12 December.

#### **Climate Change**

The Climate and biodiversity team have been very active working through their work programme.

On 31 October 2023 I attended the ECC Autumn Climate Summit, which focused on Restoring Nature and Building Resilience. Three officers from the Climate Change and Biodiversity Team also attended (they used the new EV for hire to drive to Chelmsford!). It was a very good event. Stimulating talks and Q/As with Tony Juniper (Natural England) and Lord Deben (alias John Gummer for the more ancient of us, who had led the UK's national Committee for Climate Change until recently). There were not many punches held. There were also us many other more local speakers and panelists, and overall about 100 plus attendees. One big take-away for me was the fact that a series of Local Farm Clusters have been set up (along the main river courses and watersheds). These are aimed at focusing on actions that the farming community can take. This is very important for our very rural environment.

A recording of the summit is available on [you tube here](#), so if you have time I recommend listening to the key note speakers, particularly Lord Deben (approx. 6minutes in).

We will be working on the follow-up actions arising from this. One thing where Uttlesford is now ahead of the Essex pack is having set a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 20% in our recently released Reg 18 Local Plan Consultation. This was met with pleasure by the ECC staff and a number of the key partners present.

On 9 November, a very positive meeting focusing on Uttlesford Community Energy was held in the UDC Saffron Walden offices. It was attended by Ollie Pendered, from Community Energy South, Chris Dodge from Saffron Walden Community Energy (for the Littlebury Project), ECC, UK Power Network, key representatives from UDC's climate change, planning (including heritage), economic development, housing, communities, and other departments; and councillors (in total about 30 people). The outcome focused on how to further develop the concept (in depth and breadth) including its financing.

On 21 November a meeting of the Saffron Walden Clean Air Project was convened. This meeting focused on the transport aspects. The coordination of the work on this project, the Local Plan and the emerging Local Walking Cycling Infrastructure Project (LCWIP) was central to the meeting. Fortunately, the same individuals are working on the various strands. The deliverable will be proposals for improvement projects.

On Friday 1 December 2023, a meeting of the ECC Air Quality Summit is scheduled.

#### **Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme:**

- We are now open for applications for Round 2 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme.
- Scheme open to community groups, town and parish councils. Grants from £1k up to £35k
- Projects that will reduce carbon emissions, or can be for nature/biodiversity

- Closing date midday 4<sup>th</sup> December. A well-attended webinar was held on Thurs, 12<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Mobility Schemes**

- The EV Car Club Contract awarded to CoWheels - a community interest company
- 1<sup>st</sup> vehicle bay @ London Rd – **was launched on 16 October.**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> vehicle bay @ Common Car Park – due to launch Jan 2024.
- All encouraged to sign up now and get free membership plus £25 driving credit.

### **Community Cargo Bike:**

- Contract awarded to Peddle My Wheels 'Our Bike' scheme.
- Bike due to launch imminently. Residents and businesses able to book via app.

### **A personal climate change note**

On 24 October 2023 I attended a meeting hosted by the German Standardization Institute (DIN) in Berlin 'Coordination of the European Hydrogen Standardization'. This was attended by the Chairs and Secretariats of all the relevant technical committees involved in the hydrogen industries.

I still Chair the European Committee for Standardization Technical Committee for the Oil and Gas and Lower Carbon Energy Industries (CEN/TC 12). This is the daughter of the identically named International Standardization Organization Technical Committee (ISO/TC 67- which I previously chaired). At the European level, we primarily adopt the International Standards into Europe, having ensured strong European input. These standards in turn become the National Standard in all the European countries including the UK via the British Standards Institute (BSI). To date the suite of documents in our committee have some 40,000 pages of detailed technical text. i.e. one document for each subject that is International but also European and hence a British Standard.

What has this got to do with Climate Change? The answer is that the companies that had been the world's oil and gas companies, are rapidly transitioning to integrated energy companies. They have to, as the world transitions from a hydrocarbon to a renewable energy system. All the bright minds are wanting to work on the renewables. Industry works by using technical specifications, and these should be standardized (into 'standards') as much as possible and sensible. Work on standards for the renewables industry (e.g. wind, solar, hydrogen, carbon capture and storage, ammonia etc) is accelerating. As an example, our work on offshore wind concentrates on reducing the costs, by focusing on appropriate safety factors, which can be lower than similar structures used for oil and gas, due to lower risks to humans and the environment.

The meeting on 24 October, included the hydrogen producers, transporters and users of hydrogen, and the associated safety and quality systems. Present therefore were those from the car and large road vehicle industry; rail; marine and inland water; pipeline transportation/gas distribution industries (but not aviation, nor cement/steel producers, who were absent); and producers including the electrolysis designers/researchers. An underlying driver is the move from blue to green

hydrogen. The outcome of this particular meeting was that better coordination across the sectors is required, and that this should be fully integrated/promoted at the international level. I left the meeting feeling positive/motivated. Hydrogen is (slowly) coming.