

Cllr Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change

Report to Full Council 23 April 2024

This report reflects the highlights of the Portfolio from End February to Mid April 2024

Climate Change

Cabinet approved the 2024/2025 Climate Change Action Plan on 19 April 2024. The report is on the agenda of this full Council Meeting. The report notes the achievements and progress made on the Climate Change Action Plan 2023/2024; and presents the forward plan under the motto 'Low Carbon, High Nature', noting the increasingly tight linkage between aiming towards zero emissions and increasing biodiversity. It details the Council's Corporate Plan priorities; and supports the Council's Climate and Biodiversity Crisis Strategy. I would like to thank the 'Team' that put this together.

I attended the Essex Climate Change Summit on 20 March 2024, with the theme 'Water'. The Summit saw the launch of the 'Water Strategy for Essex'. This is (one of) the first such strategy documents in the country. There is much work to be done on this subject.

On 4 April 2024 was held the first (quarterly) meeting of UDC's officer Climate and Biodiversity Change Board, chaired by the Chief Executive. The purpose of this is to ensure council-wide attention to the climate and biodiversity 'agenda'.

Work continues on analysis of the comments received on the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation, in relation to climate change and biodiversity, in preparation for the Regulation 19 stage. Solid policies on these will help achieve our strategy goals for many years to come.

Environmental Services

The 'Task and Finish' Group established by the Scrutiny Committee to analyse UDC's 'Operational Resilience' has completed their report. This was in the context of the waste collection disruption in January and February 2024, but with a brief to look at all UDC's operations and services. The report was discussed by the Scrutiny Committee on 16 April. I would like to thank the 'Task and Finish' Group for their report and their conclusion and recommendations. The report is on the agenda of this full Council Meeting.

On 11 April I sent an email to all Councillors concerning further relatively minor disruptions in early April. It should go without saying that I follow this service very closely. As soon as it is clear that our capacity is again insufficient, I will be arguing to increase capacity again. I don't believe that this is needed right now.

I attended a meeting of the Essex Waste Partnership - Member Advisory Board on 18 March 2024. At that meeting it was noted that ECC Cabinet had approved the

ECC Waste Strategy 2024-2054. Its adoption into UDC is being prepared, with UDC Cabinet to consider in July 2024.

Preparations are in hand to restart opening increased availability of the green waste bin collection service.

A personal climate change note

I joined 50 people, of all ages from 3 to a lot, in the village of Pleshey (next village to High Easter in the direction of Chelmsford) on the morning of 3 February 2024 to plant up a 'Community Orchard'. The orchard initially has some 45 different fruit trees (apples, pears, plums, gages, cherries and quinces) mostly comprising Essex's Heritage Fruit Tree varieties. The trees were supplied by the East of England Apples and Orchards Project (EEAOP is a charity of which I am a Trustee). Within 3 hours they were planted; protected from deer, and rabbits; and given a hedge. They were paid for by ECC, through a grant scheme honouring the Kings Coronation. The land was given up by a local farmer, and another used a tractor to bash in the fencing posts. EEAOP grafts and distributes 3000 to 4000 East of England heritage fruit trees each year. Apart from the fruit, and heritage interest, they help a little towards carbon sequestration. I had helped design this orchard; and I always get a huge buzz from planting them. Promise for the future. There are several places in Uttlesford with fruit tree collections, open to the public. These include the Gardens of Easton Lodge, in Little Easton; and Bridge End Garden in Saffron Walden.