

Colchester's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2015-2020

Progress Report for 2016/17

Introduction

Colchester's Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) 2015-2020 was adopted in January 2015. The 5 year Strategy and Delivery Plan set out the way in which Colchester Borough Council (CBC) and its partner organisations will work together to address environmental sustainability within the Council and across the borough.

The ESS Progress Report for 2016/17 contains some highlights from the Strategy that have been achieved in the second year of the strategy (April 16 – March 17).

To view alongside this document is:

- ESS Delivery Plan update
- ESS Evidence base update

Two Strategic Priorities were identified for the ESS:

1. Priority 1 – 'Community Leadership' by reducing the Council's environmental impact from Council Buildings, Services and Operations.
2. Priority 2 – 'Building Resilient Communities' through leading by example and working with Colchester's Residents, Businesses and the Third Sector.

Priority 1: 'Community Leadership' by reducing our environmental impact of Council's Buildings, Services and Operations.

Key deliverable: Meet targets in CO2 reduction by 2020.

Action: Publish our Greenhouse Gas Report annually

Progress: Completed.

The 2016/17 Greenhouse Gas report identified that the Council had reduced its carbon emissions by 55% from baseline year 2008. This means that Colchester Borough Council have exceeded its 40% reduction target for 2020 by 15% 3 years ahead of schedule.

The Council have been able to achieve this by bringing Local Authority Carbon Management (LACM) projects forward for implementation in one Phase with a new completion date set for June 2017.

Key deliverable: Look at opportunities to reduce energy use.

Action: Identify opportunities for development of low carbon private sector homes.

Progress: In progress

A new Housing Stock Survey has been commissioned and this will provide detailed information on opportunities within Colchester to retrofit existing homes to make them low carbon.

Key projects underway that are working to deliver energy efficient buildings include the NE Essex Garden Communities and Northern Gateway Development where the viability of heat networks will be investigated to deliver long-term low carbon heating solutions for local residents.

Key deliverable: Supporting our staff

Action: Increase awareness of environmental sustainability

Progress: Completed

Green Office Week was introduced in May 2016 for Council Staff. This looked at ways staff could work and travel in a more efficient and sustainable way through participation in a week's timetable of events to raise awareness of the opportunities available to staff, inclusive of those working remotely.

Key deliverable: Housing stock improvement

Action: Through delivery of Phase 1 of the LACM Plan review communal areas in flats and sheltered accommodation for lighting upgrades to reduce energy costs.

Progress: Completed

All stairwells in flats and sheltered accommodation were assessed and where viable have had lighting upgrades to natural light tubes and LED on sensors and timers.

Action: Installation of a district heating network to sheltered accommodation for 46 flats at Worsnop House.

Progress: Completed

Two Gas Absorption Heat pumps were installed and will provide heat and hot water. The use of mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, low lighting, Solar PV and Solar Thermal panels, triple glazed windows and doors, and an energy meter will all work together to reduce tenant's energy use.

New Actions completed in 2016/17:

- Improved monitoring and reporting system for greenhouse gas reporting.
- Upgraded software for capture of fleet data; to help record and assess fuel use and mileage more accurately.
- Reviewed new government guidance for HECA and updated the way we monitor and record information.
- Worked with a community Partner to educate our tenants on the benefits of Smart Meters.

New Actions planned for 2017/18:

- Make CBC a leader in the field of installing heat network technology to generate affordable heating for residential and commercial buildings by making the project accessible to other Councils.
- Validate the position of the Council as a leading carbon cutting Council in the UK through benchmarking and/or accreditation through an independent assessor.
- Review opportunities for Electric Vehicles and charging points.
- Identify opportunities to deliver more sustainable lifestyles in Colchester through provision of sustainable homes, transport networks and adequate green space allocation through a strategic approach to allocation and distribution of large scale housing led, mixed use development at the proposed North Essex Garden Communities.
- Integrate Museums sustainability objectives as set out in their strategy as required by Arts Council England.

Priority 2: 'Building resilient communities' by working with Colchester's Residents, Businesses and the Third Sector.

Key deliverable: Supporting local communities to help them become resilient to climate change.

Action: Enable better access to developing local emergency plans for Town & Parish Councils to address effects of Climate Change.

Progress: On Target

The Council works closely with the group of District Emergency Planning Officers (DEPO) to assist in the roll out of training to support development and refresh of community based plans. West Mersea Town Council have updated their plan due to the risks of coastal flooding.

Action: Support local community action and development of new partnerships.

Progress: Completed

The Council led Building Resilient Communities event was held at the Mercury in November 16 to support 150 people from local and national organisations to explore opportunities to work more collaboratively in building resilience against climate change. The event included a morning seminar and 5 workshops for Professionals working in Housing, Communities, Education, Businesses and other Councils.

Action: Work to reduce the number of households vulnerable to living in fuel poverty.

Progress: Completed

The Council worked with a Community Partner to secure another year of Big Energy Saving Network (BESN) Funding to deliver one to one support for vulnerable residents that needed help to switch to lower energy tariffs. In addition to that a small grant was secured from Smart Meters GB to help residents understand the benefits of switching to smart meters. Information was shared during Big Energy Week 2016, and with frontline workers in direct communication with people living in Council housing.

Key deliverable: Identify sources of grant and match funding.

Action: Identify opportunities for larger Community and Council led sustainability projects

Progress: On Target

Heat Network Development Funding and Heat Network Implementation Funding have been secured so that areas across Colchester can benefit from an infrastructure of heat networks before sites are developed for housing. This will ensure heat is stored, captured and reused to heat buildings on and near the site.

Key deliverable: Identify opportunities to deliver sustainable transport.

Action: Develop a new Transport Strategy as part of the review of the Local Plan process.

Progress: On Target

Action: Work with the Highways and Transportation Authorities and transport operators to secure investment into Colchester for sustainable transport.

Progress: On Target

New Actions completed in 2016/17:

- Support local Businesses to reduce their energy use in buildings by working with Partners who can review energy use and make recommendations to cut energy consumption.

New Actions planned for 2017/18:

- Apply for Warm Homes funding in 2018 to improve Private Sector housing by making homes more energy efficient.
- Enable local environmental groups to work more collaboratively by facilitating a networking session and delivering an information session with potential funding bodies.
- Support key delivery partners so they are able to provide more services and support to residents through access to rural training providers and projects promoting health and well-being linked to the natural environment.
- Complete viability testing to enable the Council to deliver a heat network infrastructure plan to provide energy efficient homes in the Northern Gateway.
- Support local 'Green Open Homes' event in September 2017 so residents are better able to see technologies at work in the home, and realise the benefits of renewable energy technologies.

2016/17 in Summary

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy has been successfully delivered during 2016/17 and in recognition of its success the Council won the Environmental Awareness category in the Regional and Countywide Essex Business Awards 2016.

Areas of particular success and achievement have been in reducing carbon emissions through the implementation of the LACM Plan. Achieving a 55% carbon reduction from the 2008 baseline year is a significant achievement that Residents; the Council and its Staff should be proud of.

What's next for the ESS?

The new actions identified for delivery in 2017/18 will help meet the future direction for the ESS, as prescribed by the Council's Leadership Team, which is to:

- Further develop community partnerships so collaborative working can achieve more in environmental sustainability.
- Further support Groups to find suitable external funding to develop their projects and grow services.
- Share the Council's experience of cutting its carbon emissions and delivering new technologies with other Councils and organisations across the UK so that a wider achievement to reduce carbon emissions is achieved.
- Work more with communities to help them become more resilient to the changing world around us.