

# Colchester's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2015-2020

## Progress Report for 2015/16

### 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 2015/16 contains some highlights of the Strategy that have been achieved in the first year of the strategy (April 15 – March 16).

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:** Develop a new 5 year Carbon Management Plan by end of 2016 which will help to identify that a 40% reduction is achievable

**Progress:** Completed.

A new Local Authority Carbon Management Plan (LACM) 2016-2020 has been developed, and is expected to exceed a 40% reduction target from our baseline year of 2008.

#### Key deliverable: Embed green procurement.

**Action:** Align environmental sustainability strategy aspirations with the procurement strategy by end of April 2015

**Progress:** Completed.

The new procurement strategy outlines how the tender process will ensure that CBC selects products and services that minimise environmental impacts and new environmental questions have been written and applied to ITT and IQQ questions for the Tender process.

## **Key deliverable: Look at opportunities to reduce energy use.**

**Action:** Monitor and reduce energy use in our own buildings by 31 March 2016

**Progress:** Completed

As part of the LACM development 10 priority projects and 12 aspirational carbon reduction projects were identified for Council owned buildings and efficiency projects to be implemented up to 2020. All the projects focus on making corporate buildings more energy efficient.



## **Key deliverable: Supporting our staff**

**Action:** Increase awareness of environmental sustainability

**Progress:** On target.

A new Sustainability webpage now demonstrates connected services contributing to environmental sustainability and can be accessed by residents, visitors, partners and staff [www.colchester.gov.uk/sustainability](http://www.colchester.gov.uk/sustainability). A new sustainability film has been produced which is due to be launched at the end of May 2016.

## **Key deliverable: Housing stock improvement**

**Action:** Photo Voltaic (PVs) fitted to all housing stock where appropriate.

**Progress:** Completed

The target was for 2,560 Homes to be improved and made more energy efficient. 2,111 properties were completed before the Government reduced the FiT whereby the Colchester model no longer became viable. This project is now closed and the CBC stock has a total of 2,674 homes (45%) with PV installations

### **New Actions for Priority 1 in 2016/17:**

- Improve monitoring and reporting system for next year's greenhouse gas report.
- Upgrade software for capture of fleet data; which will help record and assess fuel use and mileage more accurately.
- Review HECA reporting duties as it is no longer a statutory requirement.
- Embed Sustainability into Colchester Borough Council's induction/ training processes.

## **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:** Disseminate information about Green Deal and opportunities to residents through ECO.

**Progress:** Completed

During 2015 the Communities Team supported 23 Customers who had impartial energy saving advice. Customers were given contact details for reputable providers of home energy saving measures. 7 self-referring Customers were provided with temporary heating

via the Warm Homes Emergency Heater Scheme whilst their home heating emergency was being resolved.

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

**Progress:** On target

Work with local Environmental Charities and Community groups to develop new projects have helped to fill gaps in provision. The alternative switching service for vulnerable households ran for 2 years up to the end of 2015. The project was funded by DECC and delivered by trained volunteers from local Charity Enform, they exceeded their target to support over 100 people (including vulnerable households and Council frontline workers).

CBC Commercial Services supported St Mary's School's application to become an Eco-Schools Ambassador School, the application was successful and they will take on this role up until 2017.

**Action:** Work to reduce the number of households vulnerable to living in fuel poverty (on target).

**Progress:** On target

Winter Warmth Campaign events were delivered in 4 locations across Colchester in partnership with Colchester CVS.

### **Key deliverable: Alignment of Colchester Borough Council strategies to enable a collaborative approach with external partners to achieve environmental sustainability**

**Action:** Develop a new Low Emissions Strategy (LES) by end of 2015

**Progress:** Completed

The Air Quality Action Plan & Low Emission Strategy was completed.

**Action:** Develop a new Housing Strategy by end of 2015 (completed)

**Progress:** Completed

The Housing Strategy 2015-2020 was adopted by Cabinet in March 2015. The Housing Strategy has clear links to the ESS under Priority 7 '*work to ensure that existing and new homes are healthy, safe and energy efficient*' and a progress report will be published in June 2016.

### **Key deliverable: Develop, create and promote opportunities for developing environmental understanding which will help retain rural skills and grow the local green economy.**

**Action:** Development and retention of rural skills and local training opportunities

**Progress:** on target

The Council has worked with a rural training provider, Abberton Rural Training (ART), who has developed local rural training facilities and courses for students not in education, employment or training (NEET), mainstream and mature students. ART has been able to develop its courses quickly and meet referral demands, offering places for 177 students in the last academic year.

**Action:** Support green business growth

**Progress:** On target

The new Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) 2015 to 2021 was adopted in September 2015.

### **Key deliverable: Identify sources of grant and match funding.**

**Action:** Deliver pilot project to support vulnerable people who cannot switch through the Big Community Switch programme

**Progress:** Completed

Small grant funding was secured for partnership project to deliver community project focussing on switching vulnerable households energy bills. 2 years of DECC funding secured which came to an end March 2015.

The iChoosr Community fund was secured to deliver a higher impact Communications and marketing campaign. The fund allowed back-lit panels at Colchester train station; a radio advert and banners in high traffic areas (including bus stops).

### **Key deliverable: Look at opportunities to reduce costs and save energy use in our communities.**

**Action:** Encourage residents and customers to sign up for the Big Community Switch (BCS).

**Progress:** On target

A review of the BCS scheme was carried out in 2015; it showed that over £135,000 had been saved by local residents through switching since the scheme began.

Households were saving on average just over £200 per annum, per household, and in most recent auctions 100% of residents could save should they choose to switch.



**Action:** Encourage SMEs to take part in the iChoosr brokerage scheme to reduce energy costs and switch to appropriate business energy meters

**Progress:** On target

**Action:** Energy switching information to be included in sign up packs for every new CBH Resident by end of 2015

**Progress:** Completed

In 2015 all new CBH residents received an information leaflet telling them how to switch energy providers, within their Welcome Packs, and this is planned to continue in 2016.

**Action:** Look at the viability of delivering Energy Assessments for Private Sector homeowners by end of 2015

**Progress:** Completed

Viability work has been completed which highlighted that the current market to the private sector was found to be very competitive.

CBH have carried out 12 EPCs free of charge to private landlords, this also includes offering energy efficiency advice. CBH is now looking at the viability of a private sector leasing scheme whereby they offer property and tenancy management to private landlords.

## Key deliverable: Identify opportunities to deliver sustainable transport.

**Action:** Realise opportunities for sustainable transport infrastructure and assess opportunities for new projects

**Progress:** On target.

Progress includes delivery of upgrades to EURO 3 standard buses; work with ECC to deliver a new Park and Ride in Colchester; introduction and reinstatement of cycle parking; work with developers to incorporate cycle parking and cycle routes, and where appropriate seeking contributions to bus services; developing with Essex University a new 'way finding' app; continuing to service Colchester travel plan members and promote new opportunities with travel planning.

## Key deliverable: Provide a readily accessible online section on environmental sustainability for Colchester residents.

**Action:** Maximise the effectiveness of self-serve for customers so they can access information about environmental sustainability issues online

**Progress:** Completed

Customers/ residents are able to find information and advice on everything from energy efficiency; reducing energy costs; to volunteering and leading on their own environmental projects at [www.colchester.gov.uk/sustainability](http://www.colchester.gov.uk/sustainability) launched at the end of 2015.

## Key deliverable: Work to reduce fuel poverty in Colchester.

**Action:** Support most vulnerable residents, who are most at risk of fuel poverty, and help raise awareness of the help available to residents on low incomes

**Progress:** On target

Through the Council's Community Initiatives Team and Zone Wardens information and advice is available on remedial action home owners can take to make their homes cheaper to heat and light. Zone Teams receive quarterly updates on the Council's Big Community Switch so that they are able to encourage homeowners to check that they are getting best value for money from their current energy suppliers.

Zones incorporated fuel poverty advice into existing 'coffee and chat events' that run as a programme throughout the year and these events tend to be with the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Online information is available on oil buying schemes, available for residents not on gas.

The Colchester Borough Council website has been updated to incorporate up to date information about home energy saving, winter fuel payments and the new warm homes online customer referral process.

**Little things, big results**

At this time of the year our homes use more energy, which make how it'll affect our bills a worrying thought. However, there are small things you can do to make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible.

**Did you know over 2000** of our properties have Photovoltaic Panels installed, helping to reduce energy bills.

**Brrrrrrr. Sort out that draft!** Using a draught excluder under doors can stop heat escaping.

According to the Energy Saving Trust lighting accounts for **18%** of a typical households energy bill. You could save on your lighting by moving to energy efficient lightbulbs.

**Top Tip** Don't put clothes directly on radiators to dry as this makes your radiators work harder – plus the resulting condensation could result in damp and mould.

**Top Tip** Clean where you can't see! When the condenser coils at the back of your fridge are dirty, your fridge uses more energy. So, give it a clean!

**Take it off standby!** Some household appliances still use energy, even if they're switched off. According to the Energy Saving Trust households spend as much as £30 a year powering appliances left in standby mode.

**Big Community Switch** Making sure you're getting the best energy deal. Changing energy suppliers might seem daunting, but it's really easy with the Big Community Switch. It's really easy to find out if you could be getting a better deal – even if you're on a prepayment meter. Just visit [www.colchester.gov.uk/bigcommunityswitch](http://www.colchester.gov.uk/bigcommunityswitch) for details. Signing up is quick and easy. You just need an email address and an energy bill to hand. But hurry you only have until 1 February. Since the scheme started over 600 households in Colchester have switched supplier with the Big Community Switch, saving a combined total of over £100,000 to date. If you don't have access to the internet you can call 507555 for more details.

**Loads of Christmas veg to cook?** Invest in a steamer or segmented pan. Then you can cook all your veg on one ring/hob!

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Article in publication December 2015: CBH's tenant and leaseholder newsletter, *Housing News and Views*

## **Key deliverable: Engage with partner agencies that could support us in the delivery of sustainability projects.**

**Action:** Work with key partners to take a collaborative approach to 'climate change adaptation' by end of 2016

**Progress:** On target

Community Energy event delivered with Partners to support generation of local energy through renewable technologies, 74 participants took part from Community Groups, Clubs and Town and Parish Councils.

**Action:** Continued participation of local schools and colleges, Friends groups, Essex Wildlife Trust, Essex Forest Education Initiative, Walk Colchester and Colchester Natural History Society in country parks and countryside sites.

**Progress:** Completed

Colchester's Country Park staff have continued to work with a wide range of groups, this includes:

- Participation with over 50 Early Years and KS1 to KS4 local school & college educational groups.
- Hosting, administering and co-organising 33 events and schemes with a range of community organisations, outdoor recreational groups, charities and Forest School users including Kardia Health, St Helena Hospice, Essex Stragglers, and Essex Wildlife Trust.
- Led or enabled over 1000 volunteer project days with a range of voluntary organisations including Colchester Countryside Volunteer Rangers, Big Friendly Gardeners, and Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Essex University vTeam, Wivenhoe Wood Working Party, and Spinney Working Group.
- Participation with the national Walking for Health scheme contributing over 100 volunteer led days and 1000 health walk participants.
- Joint working with Colchester Natural History Society on Wildlife Trail App, Information panels and Wildlife cameras at High Woods Country Park. Due to be launched March 2016.
- 46 Gardening for Health sessions led for a range of health referrals and volunteers.

## **2015/16 in Summary**

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy has been successfully delivered during 2015/16 and Services across the Council have strived to achieve its target milestones, in some cases ahead of the specified deadlines in the delivery plan. Areas of particular success and achievement have been in working in partnership; improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock; supporting households to reduce energy bills; improving public transport provision; and make further commitment to reduce the Council's environmental impact.