

Councillor Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change

Report to Full Council – 25 February 2025

Climate Change

On 29th January I attended a **Net Zero Finance Leadership Summit** in London Guildhall. The Summit was part of a wider knowledge exchange programme for senior decision-makers across local authorities that are exploring how they can finance their local net zero investment programmes.

The summit explored current market solutions and the funding mechanisms, commercial models and governance structures that are needed to attract both private and public investment into local net zero and climate action.

A key question was how we can shift our current approach from looking at the 'costs' of decarbonisation' to how can we create 'value' in net zero pathways and realise the opportunities to establish revenue from energy assets and natural capital.

Key messages – it is not possible for Local Authorities to achieve their decarbonization plans via public sector purse and government grants alone; there is expectation of 'blended' finance models becoming available which will bring LAs and Private Finance together in joint investment opportunities; there is a need to shift the focus of decarbonization and energy generation plans to demonstrate how these deliver health outcomes for communities.

Climate Action Updates:

North Essex Councils Climate Partnership (NECCP) – Energy Opportunities Work Stream

- Officers have commenced work with the NECCP on identifying Renewable Energy Generation Opportunities across our estate. This work has been prioritised by the North Essex Councils CEO group.
- Purpose of the work stream is to support:
 - Reducing Costs – improving Council estates by making place-based energy investments.
 - Creating a collaborative proposition for investment in public estates to achieve Net Zero across the North Essex authorities. Aggregate projects to demonstrate the opportunity of large-scale investment.

County and District Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Consultation

- On 10th January the **public consultation** on the [Uttlesford LCWIP](#) closed.
- The LCWIP is 10-year strategic approach to cycling and walking improvements, it focuses on delivering a new strategic cycle network, setting out the quality of current provision and priorities for future investment in

Uttlesford and has two more settlement-based plans for Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow.

- Essex County Council are now completing their analysis of responses and comments received and then will finalise a **report on the consultation**.

UDC Carbon Baseline Report and Trajectory to Net Zero

- APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) Energy completed an analysis of the council carbon emission baseline data and presented an illustration of the trajectory, interventions and investment required to achieve net zero by 2030.
- The report outlined key recommendations which UDC officers will present for further discussion at the Climate Change and Biodiversity Project Board.

Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme

- In December applications to the **Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme** were evaluated and a shortlist of 16 projects was submitted to Cabinet for approval on 13 Feb.
- This year the panel were pleased to be able to support several **River Restoration** projects including on the River Roding, River Pant and the Newport River and Upper Cam. This supports the Council's ambitions to protect and restore local chalk streams.

Sustainable Uttlesford (SU)

- In January, the proposal to constitute **Sustainable Uttlesford** as a community organisation was agreed at a meeting of the **Sustainable Uttlesford Network**.
- The **core purpose of SU** is to encourage, motivate and support village, town, parish and other local community sustainability groups, through providing them with expertise, advice, financial and other support.
- A launch event is planned for April which will also celebrate **projects** that have been funded through the **Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme**.

Government Strategy on Fuel Poverty and Warm Homes

- A consultation has commenced on [Review of the Fuel Poverty Strategy](#) (close 4th May). The government are seeking views on:
 - an updated policy plan to support progress towards the fuel poverty target and to help vulnerable households
 - the future role of the fuel poverty target
 - how fuel poverty is measured
- A consultation has also commenced on [Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes in England and Wales](#) (close 2nd May). This consultation proposes to require privately rented homes to meet Energy

Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C or better by 2030 and to increase the cost cap to £15,000. Other changes proposed include bringing short term lets within scope of MEES.

Essex Air Quality Strategy - update

- Members made recall that UDC are members of the Essex Air Quality Consortium, a group of like-minded professionals working collaboratively to deliver benefits for districts across Essex, through shared resource and expertise.
- A public consultation on the draft Essex wide Air Quality Strategy was launched on 20th January and will run for 6 weeks, closing 2nd March.
- The best way to find out more about the strategy is by visiting: www.essexair.org.uk/strategy.
- It is anticipated that all going well, the final draft version of the strategy will be considered for adoption by UDC in early summer.

Environmental Services Update:

Vehicles

One of three new vehicles have arrived from the manufacture, and it will replace a temporary truck that has been used to create our 11th collection round. The other two will replace some of our ageing cover lorries that are regularly used when our frontline lorries are off the road, and these should arrive within the next few weeks.

Food Waste project in Flats

We are working with Essex Council Council (Love Essex) to trial food waste recycling at four flat complexes over the next few months. This is part of wider project across Essex to help identify ways to improve recycling at these historically difficult sites.

Residual bin – one bag a week challenge

In a separate project, we are working with Love Essex to help a 25% of residents reduce the amount of residual waste they put out each fortnight. Again, this is part of a wider project involving a few other districts to help understand what interventions have greatest impact.

Small waste electrical items

Finally, we will be launching a new kerbside collection service for small electrical items across the district in the spring, subject to small adaptations being made to our vehicles. This will enable us to collect items and take them to be recycled, reducing useful materials going to landfill.