

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

### **Report to Full Council – 22 April 2025**

#### **Climate Change**

#### **Climate Action Updates:**

##### **UDC Grant Success – Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund**

- In March Officers received confirmation that they were successful in a bid for funding to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.
- UDC were awarded a grant of £626,299 which will be used to deliver a low carbon heating project at the London Road Office.
- The project includes installation of building fabric and energy efficiency measures such as: insulation-draught proofing; roof insulation; secondary glazing; installation of Air Source Heat Pumps, and a small number of solar PV panels.

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

- UDC Officers have reviewed opportunities and agreed a high-level list of ideas for Renewable Energy Generation Opportunities across our estate.
- Concern has been raised within NECCP about changes to EPC regulations on commercial lets with questions around what buildings will remain in their portfolio, and secondly LGR which raised questions over which Council assets will be retained in the move to unitary authority status.

##### **Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme Celebration and Launch of Sustainable Uttlesford**

- On April 9<sup>th</sup> UDC is hosting a celebration event at the Little Canfield Business Park to celebrate the Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme.
- The event includes inspiring presentations, discussion, and Q&A with the opportunity for attendees to network and learn about practical ways to take collective action on climate change within their community.
- The evening will formally launch the new community collaboration 'Sustainable Uttlesford' whose aim is to motivate and support the village, town and other local community sustainability groups, by providing them with expertise, advice, financial and other support.

##### **DEFRA Clean Air Project Saffron Walden – Cycle Scheme Success**

- Sunny and dry weather in February marked a positive start to the spring cycling season in Saffron Walden, where the On Street App Bike scheme reported a total of 261 rentals for the month - this was an increase of 90 hires from January.
- Total rentals since the scheme launched in April 2024 are now at 3105. Memberships also saw a boost in February with 14 new members and total members just below 400.
- Travel to the Station and Common Car Park remains the most popular route for users.
- At the end of February, the operator installed an extra bike stand at Common Car Park giving much needed capacity at this location.
- Expansion of this scheme to Littlebury and Newport is currently being considered.
- Watch out for our Summer Community Cycling Events taking place on 29th May and 15<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Uttlesford Clean Air Schools Project**

- Following the success of the school pollution awareness project in Saffron Walden, Officers commissioned MP Smarter travel to deliver a school engagement & education project with 10 schools from across the district.
- Project aims are to raise awareness about levels of air pollution and support mode shift - delivered via assemblies, surveys, anti-idling events and completing a school travel plan.
- Each school is being supported to achieve accreditation to bronze level on Mode Shift Stars.
- Schools that have engaged with the project so far are: Thaxted Primary School; Stansted Magna Carta Primary Academy; Elsenham CoE Primary; Dunmow St Mary's Primary; Helena Romanes Primary; Helena Romanes Secondary; Takeley Roseacres Primary; Chrishall Holy Trinity Primary and Stebbing Primary.

### **Essex Air Quality Strategy - update**

The consultation on the draft strategy prepared by the Essex Air Quality Consortium, that brings together 15 borough, district, city, county and unitary councils across Essex, closed on 2<sup>nd</sup> March. Members will recall that legislation (Environmental Act 2021) requires the Council to adopt an Air Quality Strategy, intended to identify and quantify Air Quality issues in Essex and set out actions to improve Air Quality. This strategy is required in addition to the annual air quality status reports all Councils are required to prepare and report to DEFRA each year.

Across Essex, a total of 540 survey responses to the consultation were received. Almost 10,000 page views were made to the EssexAir website and 286,000 were reached on social media.

Themes around encouraging public transport/active travel, installing green infrastructure and raising awareness of the health impacts of air pollution were the actions considered most important. 82% of respondents thought that improving air quality in Essex was important and 75% are concerned about impacts on health. There is good awareness in Essex with 88 of respondents feeling knowledgeable about air pollution and its impacts and 85% about sources of air pollution in the home. 83% of respondents supported the vision of the strategy.

Given the excellent work that has already been delivered as part of the grant funded Saffron Walden Clean Air Project, Uttlesford is very well placed to share its learning, influence the delivery of some actions and benefit from a wider Essex initiative.

The consortium will now update the strategy and reshare with officers and key partners in May. The finalised strategy will be taken to the Essex Chief Executives Forum and Essex Leaders in the summer. Following approval, we hope to bring the strategy to a full Council meeting in October.

### **Environmental Services Update:**

#### **Vehicles**

All three of our new vehicles have arrived from the manufacturer replacing some of our ageing cover lorries that are regularly used when our frontline lorries are off the road.

#### **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. This project started in March.

#### **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.