

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 12 October 2021

Portfolio: Planning and Sustainability (Cllr N Bedford)

Subject: Climate Change and Sustainable Transport Update

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- 1. To consider progress on the Climate Change and Sustainable Travel agendas.**

Report:

1. In September 2019, EFDC declared a Climate Emergency and pledged to do everything within our power to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Climate Change Action Plan is under development to take forward these pledges. This report outlines progress made on the development of the action plan and highlights actions from the plan that are underway.

Climate Change Action Plan

2. The draft Climate Change Action Plan was approved to go for public consultation at Cabinet in April. The consultation is due to take place from October to November and will comprise of an online element with a webpage containing access to the draft Climate Change Action Plan document, frequently asked questions and both a general questionnaire and a youth questionnaire to record feedback. A series of in person events will also be run with members, the youth council and the community to give an opportunity for discussion and further questions.
3. The consultation aims to receive feedback from a wide audience to develop the draft Climate Change Action Plan and to raise awareness of climate change and the related issue of air quality that is affecting both human health and the health of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC).

Awareness Raising - Climate Change Webpages

4. Alongside the consultation climate change webpages will be launched to give background information on what climate change is and how we can all help to combat climate change. The website is split into themed sections specific to the home, travel, businesses, schools and the community among others. The pages will give ideas on how to reduce your carbon footprint as well as links to external resources and funding information.

Climate Change Staff Training

5. The Carbon Literacy Project developed certified Carbon Literacy Toolkits specifically for local authorities using funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) via The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).

The Toolkit is designed for in-house delivery and teaches the basics of climate change science, what is already happening globally and locally, how your actions may be affecting climate change and what you can do both individually and within your organisation to help. During the course, two significant low carbon pledges are made related to the individual's role in the organisation.

6. The training has been launched internally with a pilot session taking place with a small group of Service Managers in July. Feedback received was positive saying the training was 'extremely interesting and thought provoking' and 'very inspiring' therefore further sessions will be run from November.

Tree Planting

7. Epping Forest District Council have been awarded approximately £65k of grant funding through the Forestry Commission's Local Authorities Treescapes Fund to support planting of approximately 2,300 trees at Jessel Green.
8. The proposed planting at Jessel Green aims to bring the many benefits of increased tree cover these include an enhanced local environment, increased biodiversity, carbon storage, reduced flood risk and improved air quality. A proposed planting design is going for public consultation shortly to get feedback to inform the final planting design.

Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (GHG LAD)

9. The GHG LAD scheme aims to raise the energy efficiency of low income and low energy performance homes with a focus on energy performance certificate (EPC) ratings of E, F or G helping to reduce bills for fuel poor households as well as reducing carbon emissions.
10. EFDC were part of a successful consortium bid, led by Essex County Council (ECC), for GHG LAD Phase 1. The phase completed in August 2021 and the latest communication showed that 9 properties in Epping Forest were upgraded.
11. EFDC have been allocated approximately £361k for GHG LAD phase 2, which will allow for the upgrade of approximately 35-40 homes. Working with the private housing team, the communities and wellbeing team and our managing agent we are looking to generate referrals for the scheme that will run until March 2022.
12. A further consortium bid has been placed for Sustainable Warmth funding, which brings together GHG LAD Phase 3 and the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 1. The delivery timeframe from this scheme will run from January 2022 to March 2023.

Electric Charge Points

13. Instavolt contract for rapid chargers (120kWh) at Oakwood Hill East car park is at final negotiation stage via Legal and Re Power. Up to five other car parks have suitable electricity supply if this proves successful – Instavolt solution is low to zero cost to EFDC and generates site rental and profit share. This site exceeds the minimum requirements for success: will be one of fastest charging points in Essex; close to M11/A406 ULEZ; surrounded by businesses of suitable type; Crate development is adjacent with Costa and retail/services; suitable demographics in Loughton; under-used car park.
14. Increase in on-site charging to accommodate EFDC and Qualis fleet conversion to EV. Trial of E-on's Vehicle to Grid methods at Civic which makes use of two-way flows and in-car 'storage' to improve the building's electricity efficiency and costs.

15. ECC's position re on-street EV charging appears over-cautious. Unseen bid submitted to OZEV ORCS scheme for trials of safe delivery of kerbside charging via pavement channels and/or overhead gantry approach. Use of street lamps as per most London boroughs is not favoured by ECC. At least 36% of local homes do not have access to viable off-street parking which will become a serious impediment to EV adoption within the next 18 months. Essex is noted as having one of the worst ratios of public charging points per 100k population in the country. Note that Instavolt type rapid chargers are an inappropriate sole charging method, so cheap overnight local charging is essential.

Taxis

16. Campaign is underway to understand incentives and barriers to adoption of EV by minicabs and taxis. This is a high local mileage group and a legitimate part of the sustainable transport mix, including for those without cars due to low income or physical constraints. Survey in early October ahead of A406 ULEZ zone and review of licensing regime for new entrants to incentivise BEV fully electric. Initial analysis shows minicab drivers are much less likely to have access to off street parking, including large clusters in EFDC social housing. EV charging provision on Estates is under review, including some resident requests.

DRT/Bus

17. A difficult flat usage quarter on DaRT87 as we moved from key workers and essential trips to the start of reopening of mass commuting and school journeys. Large scale 'hybrid' and WFH working means the need for tube station links and general local commuting is still suppressed. Major caution also still exists among 'traditional' bus users such as the elderly and our marketing has not reached this audience effectively.
18. EV bus trial (14 seat fully accessible vehicle) is being set up in Nov/Dec, starting with a simple shopper shuttle between Broadway and EF Shopping Park for low mobility people. This will allow us to promote DaRT87 to this audience and we will do pilot runs of the full DaRT87 route to Epping Green and Harlow using the vehicle under 'real world' conditions. Future use could include staff 'park and ride' for all-hands meetings and trial of daytime/leisure/tourism transport to the Forest.
19. Urgent but small-scale demand for DaRT87 is now apparent among school pupils needing to reach the Epping & Loughton schools highlighted in the separate PAG Air Quality report. ECC's withdrawal of subsidy for Arriva 87 has led to this situation and DaRT87 and "DaRT8" below can be a solution, albeit needing some level of ECC support to be viable.
20. Early positive signs of Chigwell home to school service ("DaRT8") using Parish minibuses via EFCT, but again some financial and operational analysis needed.
21. ECC's response to DfT's Bus Back Better is starting to emerge this/next week with updates for Districts on their Bus Services Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership with bus operators. DRT, rural services, home to school transport and customer experience improvements all need to feature strongly.
22. Epping Forest Transport Strategy refresh process is underway with a workshop in October with all relevant parties.

Reason for decision: To provide members with an update on the work to support the Climate Change Action Plan.

Options considered and rejected: Not to provide an update – Overview and Scrutiny Committee, report requested for an update on climate change.

Consultation undertaken: None

Resource implications: None

Legal and Governance Implications: None

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

The climate change agenda embodies the safer, greener principles by measuring and reducing the carbon impact of the organisation.

Background Papers: None.