

**Forward Plan Reference number: FP/157/09/21**

<b>Report title:</b> Drawdown from Climate Action Reserve: Environment & Climate Action Programme	
<b>Report to:</b> Councillor Christopher Whitbread – Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs	
<b>Report author:</b> Samantha Kennedy – Director for Environment and Climate Action	
<b>Date:</b> 25/11/2021	<b>For:</b> Decision
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

## **1. Everyone's Essex**

- 1.1 Essex County Council (ECC) has set up the Essex Environment and Climate Action Programme in response to evidence that climate change is the biggest single-issue facing Essex.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to seek to drawdown £2.5m, from the Essex Climate Change Commission Reserve, to support the delivery of the Essex Environment and Climate Action Programme, as approved by ECC in November 2021.
- 1.3 These funds will support the delivery of Everyone's Essex that has a strategic aim of creating a high quality environment. The funds will also support the delivery of recommendations in the Essex Climate Action Commission's Report 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral' published in July 2021.
- 1.4 The drawdown will be used to create key new staff roles and support key marketing and communication activity. This includes key activities to: support roll out of time-limited grants to upgrade fuel poor homes for which Essex has received over £22m from Government; advice and support for communities, residents, schools and businesses to ensure everyone can play their role in addressing the climate challenge.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Agree to the drawdown of £2.265m, as earmarked from the Essex Climate Change Commission Reserve by ECC in the November 2021 Cabinet report, for the purposes of supporting the delivery of the Essex Environment and Climate Action programme between April 2022 and March 2026, and respond to some of the recommendations in the Essex Climate Action Commission's Report 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral' published in July 2021.

- 2.2 Agree to the drawdown of a further £235,000 from the Essex Climate Change Commission Reserve for the purpose of supporting the delivery of the Essex Environment and Climate Action programme up to the end of March 2022 and respond to some of the recommendations in the Essex Climate Action Commission's Report 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral' published in July 2021

### **3. Background and Proposal**

- 3.1. The Council set up the Essex Environment and Climate Action Programme ('the programme') in response to evidence that climate change is the biggest single-issue facing Essex.
- 3.2. The Programme responds to the significant climate change impacts Essex is currently experiencing and will continue to experience, as laid out in the Essex Climate Action Commission's 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral' Report, welcomed by Cabinet on 29 July 2021.
- 3.3. The programme aims to place Essex in a leadership role in climate action and building resilience. The programme aligns closely to the Council's green growth agenda within the Economic Recovery Programme.
- 3.4. This report seeks to draw down funding of £2.265m from the Essex Climate Change Commission Reserve, as earmarked from the reserve by Cabinet in November 2021, to secure the right people, support and investment between April 2022 and March 2026, to help respond to the impacts of climate change, reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to those changes which are already inevitable between now and 2050.
- 3.5. This report also seeks to draw down a further £235,000] from the Essex Climate Change Commission Reserve to support the delivery of the Essex Environment and Climate Action programme up to the end of March 2022 alongside minor adjustments to other drawdown figures. These are fully detailed in Annex 1. Delivery support cannot wait until the next financial year; funding ceases for the Business Support Administrator in February 2022, additional Communications Officer capacity is needed now to support engagement activities and resources are also needed to promote a campaign that launches in January 2022.
- 3.6. The funding asks are focused on delivery and support that is needed to enable ECC to play a key leadership role and progress the ongoing work to respond to Essex's climate challenge; communications and engagement with ECC residents, businesses, organisations, schools, Councillors and officers. This funding asks are for:
- One Climate Officer from April 2022 to March 2026
  - An Engagement Manager from April 2022 to March 2025
  - A Business Support Administrator from March 2022 (when existing funding expires) to March 2025

- A Communications Manager from April 2023 (when existing funding expires) to March 2026
- Three Communications Officers to March 2025 (one post already funded to February 2023)
- Funding to support various communications and engagement activities across the Essex Environment and Climate Action Plan
- Funding for a Campaigns Manager from Jan 2022 to April 2023 and marketing costs to promote the Sustainable Warmth / Home Upgrade Grant programme.
- Resources to manage Essex is Green social media channels and run the Changemakers group to March 2025.

3.7. The Council has completed business cases (financial appraisals) for each of the four core ECC initiatives and following a financial appraisal of each initiative, the business cases demonstrate that each initiative is viable and that there is no further impact on the MTRS. The financial appraisal is summarised in Appendix 1.

#### **4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions**

4.1. This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:

- Strengthen communities through participation
- Develop our County sustainably
- Connect us to each other and the world

4.2. Approving the recommendations in this report will support the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030. The funding will provide for delivery and support roles needed to work across the council to hit our target.

4.3. This report links to the following strategic priorities in 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high quality environment
- Health, wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow.

#### **5. Options**

5.1 **Option 1:** Do nothing. This would not be consistent with ECC's stance on climate to date. ECC has identified environment and climate action as key priority areas of focus and has publicly committed to the Climate Change Agenda. The consequences of not responding promptly to address climate change will create significant adverse impacts on the Essex economy and Essex residents.

5.2 **Option 2:** (Recommended) Approve the requested investment of £2.5m in total, as broken down in the table at 5.1.2 below, for additional people,

support and investment to deliver the specific activities within the Essex Environment and Climate Action programme as set out in Appendix 1. ECC has committed to a environment and climate action plan and needs additional resources to be able to deliver this plan. In November 2021, Cabinet agreed to earmark £2.265m funding from the Climate Change Commission Reserve subject to full business cases being completed. This funding will be utilised for delivery and support costs between April 2022 and March 2026. This report also requests approval to drawdown a further £235,000 from the Climate Change Commission Reserve for delivery and support costs up to the end of March 2022; funding cannot wait until the next financial year. This option will help enable ECC to deliver its Environment and Climate Action programme. Not doing so, will require ECC to reduce its Environment and Climate Action programme and thus its ability to provide leadership and impact in tackling climate change.

## 6. Issues for consideration

### 6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The Essex Climate Change Commission Reserve was established in 2020 with a balance of £5m when the Essex Climate Commission was first set up. To date £2.5m has been applied from this reserve the purposes of implementing a programme to respond to the recommendations in the Essex Climate Action Commission Interim Report and to deliver the Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy as set out in the CMA FP- 898-11-20 in January 2021. ([Decision Details: Drawdown from Climate Action Reserve: Environment & Climate Action Programme \(essex.gov.uk\)](https://www.essex.gov.uk/decision-details/drawdown-from-climate-action-reserve-environment-climate-action-programme))

6.1.2 Approval is sought for a further drawdown from the Essex Climate Change Commission Reserve to fund the costs associated with the recommendations set out above of £2.5m, as detailed in Appendix 1. The forecast profile of expenditure is set out in Table 1 for the financial period 2021/22 to 2025/26.

	FTE	£'s					Total
		21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	
Delivery and support roles	3.0	3,642	205,708	210,850	216,122	87,228	723,550
Campaign and Communication roles	6.0	32,063	141,748	218,177	220,172	85,101	697,261
Essex is green social media role		60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	-	240,000
Marketing, PR, Training, Research and Membership fees		54,189	335,000	260,000	190,000	-	839,189
<b>Total</b>		<b>149,894</b>	<b>742,455</b>	<b>749,028</b>	<b>686,294</b>	<b>172,329</b>	<b>2,500,000</b>

6.1.3 This recommendation will result in the full balance of the reserve being applied by 2025/26.

6.1.4 Funds will be drawn down on an annual basis and any unspent allocations returned to the reserve at the end of each financial year.

6.1.5 In terms of the exit strategy for the specific financial commitments incurred as a result of this programme, it should be noted that any provision for redundancy is not included within the analysis above and may create a future

cost pressure for the organisation. The resourcing requirements for the programmes should be reviewed on an on-going basis to ensure continuity of deliverables both during and beyond the above time period.

## **6.2 Legal implications**

- 6.2.1 The Council's financial regulations state that all drawdowns from reserves must be approved by the Cabinet Member for Finance.
- 6.2.2 Drawing down of money from reserves does not authorise any expenditure that is a key decision or any significant changes to ECC services or funding which must be authorised by the relevant Cabinet Member.

## **7. Equality and Diversity implications**

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
  - (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

## **8. List of Appendices**

- 8.1. Appendix 1 – A summary of funding requirements
- 8.2. Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment

## **9. List of Background papers**

- 9.1. 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral' Essex Climate Action Commission's Report

<b>I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Councillor Christopher Whitbread – Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs</b>	<b>21.12.21</b>

**In consultation with:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Leader of the Council – with responsibility for Climate Change Action</b>	22.12.21
<b>Cllr Kevin Bentley</b>	
<b>Climate Change Czar</b>	22.12.21
<b>Cllr Peter Schwier</b>	
<b>Executive Director, Finance and Technology (S151 Officer)</b>	15 December 2021
<b>Stephanie Mitchener on behalf of Nicole Wood</b>	
<b>Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)</b>	20 December 2021
Susan Moussa on behalf of	
<b>Paul Turner</b>	

