

Essex Climate Action Commission – Terms of Reference

Background

At Full Council on 14/05/19, the below motion was passed by Essex County Council:

‘This Council recognises the stance that the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste has taken in improving the use of renewable energy across the County Council estate and ensuring well maintained country parks which have won national recognition and help improve the health and wellbeing of those that use them. The new role of clean air champion and developing the Green Infrastructure initiative which will achieve long lasting environmental improvements across Essex are also positive moves.

The Administration however is mindful that more must be done to improve air quality and protecting natural resources to help improve the environment for future generations. Therefore, this Council supports and endorses the Administration’s work so far and supports the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste in setting up a cross party group to investigate what further actions this Council can undertake across all its work with District/Borough/City Councils to reduce carbon emissions and promote the Green Infrastructure initiative to help improve the lives of all citizens in Essex.’

Following on from the above, at Full Council on 08/10/19, the Leader announced in his Executive Statement the formation of a formal independent cross-party commission, entitled the Essex Climate Action Commission.

While Essex County Council recognised the importance of declaring a climate emergency at the LGA General Assembly in July 2019, this is an initiative to take this further by committing to the development and delivery of a Climate Action Plan.

A strong focus on climate change and the environment will have economic benefits for Essex, as well as helping the global climate and improving the environment for citizens at the local level.

Purpose

Essex County Council aims to ensure that it has the best advice about what it can do to tackle climate change.

The purpose of the Essex Climate Action Commission is to:

- Year One: Identify ways in which ECC can mitigate the effects of climate change, improve air quality, reduce waste across Essex and increase the amount of green infrastructure and biodiversity in the county by drawing on in-house expertise, commissioning research and forming new external partnerships.
- Year Two: Explore how we attract investment in natural capital and low carbon growth

The Commission is invited to make recommendations to Essex County Council, for the Council to implement. Recommendations and policy suggestions should be transformative, but practical.

Recommendations should also note the roles of multiple partners across Essex all of whom will have responsibilities and contributions to make in moving Essex to a net zero county.

The Commission may want to encourage other organisations, both within and outside the County of Essex, to implement change.

The Cabinet will consider all the Commission's recommendations and make a decision, having regard to the costs and benefits of implementing them.

Timeline

The Commission is to last initially for 2 years. There will be 9 meetings in the first year. The Commission will produce an interim report to Cabinet half way through the first year of inception, and making a further report to Cabinet, complete with a set of recommendations at the end of the first year on a net zero action plan for Essex

In the second year, the Commission will monitor the implementation of the recommendations in year one and provide further advice and guidance on an investment plan for Essex as it moves to a sustainable, net zero economy.

Detailed workplans for the Commission to be agreed by the Commission at the beginning of each year of activity.

Membership

The Commission membership is set out in Annex A **(not published as part of scrutiny document pack as still in process of being confirmed. Will be provided at PSEG meeting on 19 March 2020)**

As well as being supported by the Council, the Commission can seek advice from Expert Witnesses, Sustainability Professionals and Observers to inform their activities.

The Council will consider funding external expert advisors on a case by case basis.

Quorum

Seven members, including the Chair, must be in attendance for the Commission to sit.

Secretariat

The Commission will be supported by a Secretariat, appointed for the duration of the Commission.

Meeting Frequency

The Commission will meet 9 times in the first year, timings to be agreed by the Commission.

The Commission will then meet quarterly in the second year.

In addition, Commission members may undertake a number of site visits to facilitate and/or enhance the process of gathering necessary evidence and information.

The Commission may form sub-groups that meet more regularly to explore specific themes/topics in more detail.

Meetings of the Commission will typically take place in Essex but may also take place in London.

Meetings will be recorded for public dissemination. Commission members should note that all discussions in the main Commission meetings will, unless by exception to be agreed in advance by the Chair, be released into the public domain.

Advisory status

The Commission is a purely advisory body and has no decision-making powers.

Formal decisions to implement any recommendations made by the Commission will be taken and actioned in accordance with the ECC Constitution.