

Scrutiny Panel Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ**

Tuesday, 06 June 2023 at 18:00

The Scrutiny Panel examines the policies and strategies from a borough-wide perspective and ensure the actions of the Cabinet accord with the Council's policies and budget. The Panel reviews corporate strategies that form the Council's Strategic Plan, Council partnerships and the Council's budgetary guidelines, and scrutinises Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decisions which have been called in.

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

You have the right to attend all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Cabinet. You also have the right to see the agenda (the list of items to be discussed at a meeting), which is usually published five working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published.

Dates of the meetings are available here:

<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/MeetingCalendar.aspx>.

Most meetings take place in public. This only changes when certain issues, for instance, commercially sensitive information or details concerning an individual are considered. At this point you will be told whether there are any issues to be discussed in private, if so, you will be asked to leave the meeting.

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Access

There is wheelchair access to the Town Hall from St Runwald Street. There is an induction loop in all the meeting rooms. If you need help with reading or understanding this document, please take it to the Library and Community Hub, Colchester Central Library, using the contact details below and we will try to provide a reading service, translation or other formats you may need.

Facilities

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Colchester, CO1 1JB

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Scrutiny Panel – Terms of Reference

1. To fulfil all the functions of an overview and scrutiny committee under section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and in particular (but not limited to):

- (a) To review corporate strategies;
- (b) To ensure that actions of the Cabinet accord with the policies and budget of the Council;
- (c) To monitor and scrutinise the financial performance of the Council, performance reporting and to make recommendations to the Cabinet particularly in relation to annual revenue and capital guidelines, bids and submissions;
- (d) To review the Council's spending proposals to the policy priorities and review progress towards achieving those priorities against the Strategic and Implementation Plans;
- (e) To review the financial performance of the Council and to make recommendations to the Cabinet in relation to financial outturns, revenue and capital expenditure monitors;
- (f) To review or scrutinise executive decisions made by Cabinet, the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee (in relation to decisions relating to off-street matters only) and the Colchester and Ipswich Joint Museums Committee which have been made but not implemented referred to the Panel pursuant to the Call-In Procedure;
- (g) To review or scrutinise executive decisions made by Portfolio Holders and officers taking key decisions which have been made but not implemented referred to the Panel pursuant to the Call-In Procedure;
- (h) To monitor the effectiveness and application of the Call-In Procedure, to report on the number and reasons for Call-In and to make recommendations to the Council on any changes required to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the process;
- (i) To review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of functions which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet;
- (j) At the request of the Cabinet, to make decisions about the priority of referrals made in the event of the volume of reports to the Cabinet or creating difficulty for the management of Cabinet business or jeopardising the efficient running of Council business;

2. To fulfil all the functions of the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee ("the Committee") under the Police and Justice Act 2006 and in particular (but not limited to):

- (a) To review and scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions;
- (b) To make reports and recommendations to the Council or the Cabinet with respect to the discharge of those functions.

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
Scrutiny Panel
Tuesday, 06 June 2023 at 18:00

The Scrutiny Panel Members are:

Councillor Darius Laws [Chairman]
Councillor Dennis Willetts [Deputy Chairman]
Councillor Tracy Arnold
Councillor Sam McCarthy
Councillor Sam McLean
Councillor Thomas Rowe
Councillor Fay Smalls

The Scrutiny Panel Substitute Members are:

All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members or members of this Panel.

AGENDA
THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING
(Part A - open to the public)

1 Welcome and Announcements

The Chairman will welcome members of the public and Councillors and remind everyone to use microphones at all times when they are speaking. The Chairman will also explain action in the event of an emergency, mobile phones switched to silent, audio-recording of the meeting. Councillors who are members of the committee will introduce themselves.

2 Substitutions

Councillors will be asked to say if they are attending on behalf of a Committee member who is absent.

3 Urgent Items

The Chairman will announce if there is any item not on the published agenda which will be considered because it is urgent and will explain the reason for the urgency.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors will be asked to say if there are any items on the agenda about which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest which would prevent them from participating in any discussion of the item or participating in any vote upon the item, or any other registerable interest or non-registerable interest.

5 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Panel will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meetings held on 14 February 2023, 3 March 2023, 14 March 2023, 15 March 2023 and 24 May 2023 are a correct record.

Scrutiny Panel Minutes 14 February 2023	7 - 14
Scrutiny Panel Minutes 3 March 2023	15 - 20
Scrutiny Panel Minutes 14 March 2023	21 - 30
Scrutiny Panel Minutes 15 March 2023 [Public]	31 - 38
Scrutiny Panel Minutes 24 May 2023	39 - 40

6 **Have Your Say!**

The Chairman will invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition on any item included on the agenda or any other matter relating to the terms of reference of the meeting. Please indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

7 **Decisions taken under special urgency provisions**

The Councillors will consider any decisions by the Cabinet or a Portfolio Holder which have been taken under Special Urgency provisions.

8 **Cabinet or Portfolio Holder Decisions called in for Review**

The Councillors will consider any Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decisions called in for review.

9 **Items requested by members of the Panel and other Members**

(a) To evaluate requests by members of the Panel for an item relevant to the Panel's functions to be considered.

(b) To evaluate requests by other members of the Council for an item relevant to the Panel's functions to be considered.

Members of the panel may use agenda item 'a' (all other members will use agenda item 'b') as the appropriate route for referring a 'local government matter' in the context of the Councillor Call for Action to the panel. Please refer to the panel's terms of reference for further procedural arrangements.

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| 10 | <p>Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2023-2024</p> <p>The panel is invited to consider the Corporate Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Targets for 2023-2024.</p> | 41 - 54 |
| 11 | <p>Work Programme 2023-24</p> <p>2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and approve the contents of the Work Programme for 2022-2023, or request amendments, additions and/or deletions.</p> <p>2.2 The Panel is asked to identify specific issues, matters or areas of Council operations which it wishes to scrutinise during the 2023-24 municipal year, and to provisionally schedule these items, subject to feedback from relevant officers on any issues which may affect reporting timescales.</p> | 55 - 68 |
| 12 | <p>Exclusion of the Public (Scrutiny)</p> <p>In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).</p> | |

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| 11 | Work Programme 2023-24 | 55 - 68 |
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- 2.2 The Panel is asked to identify specific issues, matters or areas of Council operations which it wishes to scrutinise during the 2023-24 municipal year, and to provisionally schedule these items, subject to feedback from relevant officers on any issues which may affect reporting timescales.

- ## 12 Exclusion of the Public (Scrutiny)

Part B
(not open to the public including the press)

- 13 **Scrutiny Panel Minutes 15 March 2023 [Confidential]**
- This report is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (financial / business affairs of a particular person, including the authority holding information).

SCRUTINY PANEL

14 February 2023

Present:- Cllr Willetts (Chair), Cllr Laws, Cllr Lilley, Cllr Lissimore, Cllr Scordis

Substitute Member:- Cllr Arnold for Cllr Smith

Also in Attendance:- Cllr King, Cllr Cox. Cllr McLean

389. Minutes of previous meeting

The Chairman noted that the Panel had received the requested briefing notes to cover the Northern Gateway project with Turnstone, and additional budget information. It was confirmed that the minutes from the meetings on 13 December 2022, 16 January 2023 and 24 January 2023 were accurate records.

390. Have Your Say

Mr Alan Short attended and addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1), to request that the Panel now schedule an item for consideration of the arrangements, processes and Cabinet dealings with Alumno, including involvement of Amphora Trading, and the problems encountered. Mr Short had previously requested this at the Panel's meeting on 5 July 2022, and felt that it should now be possible to schedule this item on to the work programme.

The Chairman explained that the Panel had received guidance from Andrew Weavers, Monitoring Officer, following the meeting on 5 July 2022. The situation regarding Alumno was a long-running one, and was still ongoing. The Monitoring Officer had advised that it would not be appropriate for the Scrutiny Panel to consider an item on these matters until all potential legal matters were resolved. The Chairman noted that many of these legal issues had been resolved by a High Court ruling in October 2022, but some potential legal matters still remained between Essex County Council and Alumno. The options for the Panel were to either schedule a confidential consideration of the subject [excluding members of the public from participation or viewing] or to wait until the scrutiny could be carried out in public. The Chairman's preference was for the latter option, to ensure transparency. Councillor King, Leader of the Council, agreed that there was legitimate public interest in the subject, and potential lessons to be learned, with some learning points having already been identified and acted upon, such as to improve the Council's working with Essex County Council.

Mr Short posited that the Scrutiny Panel was meant to look at how the Council could do things better in the future and cautioned that this work should be done before the memory of things faded. The Chairman gave assurance that Mr Short would be updated when progress could be made.

391. Items requested by members of the Panel and other Members

The Panel were briefed on a request made by Councillor Sunnucks, who had written to Owen Howell, the proper officer for the Panel, to request that the Panel schedule an item for it to consider the 'Northern Gateway strip lease arrangement' at a future meeting. The Chairman expanded on the request to explain that Councillor Sunnucks's view was that there were aspects of the strip leasing arrangements which were of high operational risk. This subject would involve information and discussions relating to matters of high commercial sensitivity and therefore would need to be considered in closed session of the Panel.

Owen Howell, Democratic Services Officer, advised that it would be best to schedule this item for the Panel meeting on 15 March 2023, as the agenda for the meeting on 14 March 2023 was so heavy. The Chairman supported this advice, noting that the 15 March 2023 meeting also had a heavy agenda, noting that this subject had also been discussed at the Panel's previous meeting [on 24 January 2023] and so recommended that a short item be scheduled for 15 March.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Panel receive a confidential report on the situation regarding the strip leases for Northern Gateway.

392. Briefing by the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Strategy

Councillor David King, Leader of the Council, briefed the Panel on the approach he had taken to his Portfolio. The Leader explained the team approach, which served the collective purpose, ensured that councillors had a material say on matters, cross-party, addressing issues. The Leader expressed his approach to supporting the team, officers, and councillors. The Leader praised the work of Adrian Pritchard, previous Chief Executive, and of Pam Donnelly, current Chief Executive, who had done much work to bring in funding, increasing the Council's reputation and partnership working with others.

The budget shortfall issues were described within the wider situation, which included supply chain issues. Work was started early to identify the main priorities, working with officers to address immediate situations as well as long term issues such as capital expenditures, Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd, Colchester Borough Homes.

The Chairman explained that the Panel had already looked at much of the Leader's work on different matters, such as the Budget and partnership working.

The Leader was asked what could be done to bring people back into the local labour market, in the context of it appearing that fewer in the Borough were now working than prior to the pandemic. The Leader talked of the degree to which incentives were sufficient to get people to return to the labour market. Limited action was possible for the Council and for Essex County Council. Connectivity could be improved to make work easier, and would include cheaper travel options. The Council could be a good employer, offering a model of opportunity, as well as working with the voluntary sector to expand options for residents. Opportunities could be pursued to support the Business Improvement District and support employers to invest in increased employment opportunities. The Leader expressed commitment to relationships with key institutions, such as the University of Essex, and to increasing the retention of employment within Colchester.

The Panel discussed statistics relating to the proportion of residents holding a degree or an NVQ [National Vocational Qualification] at level four or higher, and it was noted that the percentage of local people holding these qualifications, at 37%, was slightly lower than the

regional percentage, 39%, and lower than the national average. The Leader gave assurances that the Council was doing what it could, with partners which included Colchester Institute. It was sometimes difficult to identify and influence the flows of young people into higher and further education. The economic development team worked to increase Colchester's 'offer' to potential investors, aiming to increase the local demand for skills. The Council's apprenticeship scheme held an 'Apprenticeship Acknowledgement Ceremony' recently and aimed to set a good example.

When asked whether it was realistic to have a commitment to high and medium earning opportunities, when skills were required, the Leader explained that this commitment marked the importance of this to the Council, which acknowledged the skills gap and now needed to set out how the Council could help to address it. There would be potential opportunities if devolution of powers to the Council occurred. There was not currently enough power locally to set an agenda to improve skill levels, but devolution could improve the Council's ability and funding to improve skill levels and life chances.

A Panel member noted that much cash from central government had been steered by the Council into areas of multiple deprivations, but could not see differences between the indices drawn up in 2015 compared to the more-recent indices from 2019. The Leader was asked what changes he expected the use of funding to enable. The Leader explained that the effects on indices and outcomes lagged after investment, and that investment will make material differences, such as the outcomes planned for the Heart of Greenstead project, including improved health and happiness. Improved surroundings gave opportunities to improve life for residents in the area. A Panel member pointed out that the assessments to lay out the indices for areas of multiple deprivation only allocated a ten percent weighting to quality of life, compared to a twenty two percent weighting for income level, and argued that funding to improve quality of life would have minimal impact on the indices. The Leader described additional positive effects from additional funding, including better access to transport and health options, leading to an improvement in people's outlook and ability to seek a better life, better training and better employment. The Council's role was to work with others to start this chain of improvement and enable residents to improve their lives.

The Leader was asked how confident he was that councillors were currently sufficiently equipped to address local crises and emergencies, as community leaders, and not to exacerbate them. The Leader agreed that improvements could be made, which would involve working with the Council's communications team, citing the recent situation at a local hotel which was accommodating people seeking asylum in the UK. The Leader concurred with Panel members' comments about social media speeding the spread of stories, with a member of the Panel pushing for work to ensure councillors could be confident as to how best they should deal with crisis situation and carry out their communications. The Leader promised to discuss this subject with the Council's communications team.

A Panel member raised the situation in Ipswich, where Suffolk MPs were critical of the Ipswich Town Deal, and compared it with the situation in Colchester where local MPs were supportive of the Town Deal work being carried out here. The Leader was asked what the situation was regarding wider communications with the public, to help explain what project work was underway. It was suggested that signage could be erected at project sites to communicate plans and explain work underway, as well as more marketing elsewhere. The Leader gave assurances that the Council's communications team was working to do this, to advertise current projects and future improvements. Work was also underway to improve and streamline decision making and the Leader explained that the right communications at the right times would be key.

Understanding was voiced by Panel members for the situation regarding tight Council finances, but one suggestion was made that the old signage for Colchester as a town was still in place, including the purple signs on the City's outskirts which did not show the other places with which the City was twinned. Some other places which achieved city status had quickly installed new signage to show this, and one Panel Member voiced their view that it had been a mistake for the Council to take the name 'Colchester City Council', rather than an alternative such as 'City of Colchester Council.' The Leader agreed that there was a debate to be had on these matters, but argued that the most important thing would be to ensure that all signage was well presented, however it was worded, focussing on how it was presented and moving to an approach to ensure that visitors were impressed by it.

The Panel discussed the future of the City centre. The Leader was asked how work was progressing to find new occupants for the retail units which had formerly been home to Debenhams and Marks & Spencer, and to resolve issues experienced at Stane Retail Park [Tollgate] regarding traffic congestion and how to potentially ease this with improving bus links.

The Leader spoke of the vibrancy and footfall which would help the City centre to profit. Talks continued with the Business Improvement District and data from local businesses had been better than expected for the Christmas period. Efforts were being talked of to use city status to attract new brands to the City and to increase occupancy rates for commercial sites, with business leaders acting as ambassadors. An active conversation was ongoing regarding the former Debenhams site, with a less-active conversation being held regarding the former Marks & Spencer site, where the Council had not yet had much influence. It was expected that the project to improve St Nicholas Square would help resolve these issues. The Leader described talks that had been held with the businesses at Stane Park, with the Council's aim being to include them more and to show that the Tollgate area was of equivalent importance to the importance assigned to the City centre. These talks had included looking at better bus connectivity.

The Panel discussed the different centres of activity around the area and the Leader was asked if the Council had a bias towards businesses within the traditional City centre. The Leader explained that the Council was committed to making the most of the development of new centres, including new retail opportunities. The Council was open to investment, wherever it came, and linking up different centres of activity. A Panel member welcomed the success of the City centre at Christmas and that concerns regarding permitted development issues (such as conversion of retail units into residential sites) had not been realised.

The Panel discussed the positives seen in the City centre, including high footfall and the opening of a Rolex shop. The Leader welcomed new outlets such as this, arguing that they were attracted by the change and renewal occurring in Colchester. This drove investment and was a positive influence in creating a 'buzz' about the City.

The Leader was asked how he saw the future, including his views as to potential devolution of powers and what powers he wished to see the Council take up. A Panel member noted that the Council's Administration had said it wanted more control, but had not moved to seek this. The Leader expressed his wish to build upon existing Council operations, alongside fellow council leaders and Essex County Council. Progress was being made with the County Council and, depending on what devolution occurred, more funding could become available for work to improve long term quality of life, alongside greater decision making powers. The Leader argued that residents would benefit from a strengthened local

authority, with greater influence at County level, and that the Council was well-placed to work with the County Council.

A Panel member gave their view that communications within the Council had deteriorated since May [2022], voicing concerns about communications from the Administration to officers and elected members. The Leader was asked what he could do to improve communication, especially regarding decision making and ways to include councillors and residents in this. It was argued that increased pressure on officers should not be allowed to lead to a reduction in consultation. Examples were given to indicate where lack of consultation had occurred, and where local members could have given advice. The Leader offered to discuss the situation with the Chief Executive and to ensure that officers knew the need for consultation to be carried out, and best practice observed with regard to communications. The Leader posited that his Administration had an open-door policy and spent much time talking to elected members of all groups over a wide range of issues, but voiced his readiness to take on suggestions. The Leader believed that the Council did well on larger matters, and he gave an undertaking to examine how better consultation could be employed on smaller-scale decision making, to improve this and make the process smarter.

Another member of the Panel raised additional concerns over poor communication relating to the Hythe Task Force, with no action seeming to be taken or meetings held, and no information being given to councillors. The Leader apologised for the lack of communications and promised to address this.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of the Council for his briefing and the answers and views given to the Panel.

393. Briefing by the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Heritage

Councillor Pam Cox, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Heritage, briefed the Panel on work ongoing within her portfolio and paid tribute to her predecessor in the role, Councillor Laws, for passing on a well-managed portfolio. City status was a significant bonus, upon which the Council was keen to capitalise. The current Cultural Strategy had been signed off in the previous March and the Portfolio Holder explained that she saw it as her job to realise that strategy. The content of the Strategy was outlined, drawing on a range of other strategies. Work continued on Town Deal projects, the City Centre Masterplan, use of levelling up funding such as for the St Botolph's area, and planning for the legacy of gaining city status.

Organisations within Arts Council England's National Portfolio were reporting as being in good shape, including The Mercury and Firstsite. Increased funding was being obtained, however they were still experiencing the effects of increased prices and were aiming to increase visitor and audience numbers. Examples were given of actions taken to increase visitors and audience numbers. The Portfolio Holder described her role in championing these organisations [NPOs] and in ensuring that local NPOs met or exceeded the conditions set for them by Arts Council England. The NPOs had opened up their sites to attract visitors to the City, run by a range of organisations. In answer to a question regarding NPOs' curation of their environs, the Portfolio Holder gave her view that the Council and others had to do better to improve the environs of Firstsite.

The work of the Creative Colchester Partnership, chaired by Hana Loftus, was outlined and examples given of funding obtained. The vital role of the Council's support was underlined.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that work continued with the local Business Improvement

District [BID] and with the University, including on improving the City centre's offer to students to draw more footfall from the University. Work had progressed on a local listings scheme, on seeking to clear the site between Curzon Cinema and Firstsite, and on reducing the duplication of marketing efforts for the City by different partners. A new marketing group had been set up to streamline marketing efforts. When asked as to whether the Council was working with Visit Essex to reduce marketing duplication, the Portfolio Holder explained that most of this work was carried out by Claire Taylor in the local Tourism Group. Frank Hargrave, Museum and Culture Manager, detailed ongoing work to assess costs and benefits of different forms of advertising with different potential partner agencies, such as Visit Essex. There was a concern that some local attractions would be overlooked by Visit Essex.

The situation regarding the Roman Circus was covered, with efforts ongoing to push the County Council to agree to extend the City Centre Masterplan to include it within its content. Virtual heritage options were being explored to show virtual reconstructions of sites such as the Circus. The Portfolio Holder gave assurance that the working group for the Circus would continue into the future. Simon Cairns, Development Manager, was overseeing the development plan, as part of continuing work to protect the site.

The 'Visit Colchester' guide included an overview of the 'Year of Celebration' events, including attractions in the wider Colchester area within the offer marketed.

The Panel asked the Portfolio Holder to clarify what work would likely have been carried out anyway, had there been no Council Portfolio Holder for this area. The Portfolio Holder explained that the Council's Cultural Strategy had been key to her role, and that she saw it as her duty to carry out that strategy, rather than decide herself what to pursue. A key part of her role was given to be taking a lead position in partnerships with organisations such as the BID.

Praise was given to the 'Visit Colchester' guide by Panel members, with one request being made to give more advertising to events such as the Rowhedge and Wivenhoe Regattas. The Panel asked as to how widely these were distributed, and was informed that they were distributed in places such as London Liverpool Street Station. The Portfolio Holder offered to check the areas to which copies were distributed.

The Portfolio Holder explained work that was carried out to arrange a concert of the works of Mozart and was asked what was being done to attract the long-term presence of artists, such as the musicians performing at that concert. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that this aim was being pursued with partner organisations.

A discussion of branding and marketing was held, with the Panel being told of efforts to improve the City's branding to exemplify pride in gaining city status. There were also plans being put in place to forging new links with other places, including via twinning.

Questions were asked as to what KPIs and methodology were used to measure success of Council actions, and what the Portfolio Holder's view as to what 'success' looked like. It was confirmed that there were KPIs included within both the Economic Strategy and as part of the Cultural Strategy. This included collection of data on visitor numbers, and showed the importance of data sharing between the Council and its partners such as the NPOs. A Panel member suggested that online reviews published on Google or Trip Advisor could be monitored.

The Portfolio Holder was asked whether Colchester's visitor centre was in the right location

[at the Hollytrees Museum, Castle Park]. The Portfolio signalled her openness to a larger, more accessible centre if a location could be found. Conversations had been held by Council officers and Historic England regarding how Council buildings such as the Town Hall could be used, and caution was noted that a move in location would increase costs, such as from needing to employ additional staff to run it.

Answering questions as to the budget set for the Council's legacy work, the Leader of the Council explained that this was currently between £50k and £100k, with some income to cover costs. Financial and non-financial support was expected from partners, such as to support the marketing efforts and 'Year of Celebration' programme.

The Panel received confirmation that work would be going ahead on both the Red Lion Yard mosaic, and the renovation of the Natural History Museum. It was expected that costs would rise. Public consultation was ongoing regarding plans to improve the Museum, open up the frontage and add a café. Results from this were awaited.

The Panel discussed what eras from history should be concentrated upon in Colchester. The Portfolio Holder noted that, as Britain's first city, the Roman era remained important to showcase, with virtual options and experiences available to show the local ancient heritage and what it would have looked like. This could be linked to Roman festivals, gladiatorial exhibitions, and the offer at the Castle's museum. There was no timescale agreed for installing virtual displays, but this was being expedited with partners.

The Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council agreed with a view from the Panel that cultural exchanges, including via twinning, were important for encouraging tourism and the local economy. A Panel member noted that not all of the signs welcoming people to Colchester mentioned the twinning arrangements with other places. The Leader agreed that more attention needed to be paid to twinning, with the Council taking a role of civic leadership. An assurance was given to the Panel that the Leader would address this and make a budget available for civic exchange activities and welcoming guests from twinned settlements.

The Panel asked for an explanation as to the prioritisation of different workstreams, and their respective urgencies. The Leader told the Panel that work was underway to set priorities and that plans were expected to be in place before May 2023.

A Panel member suggested that plays could be held at the site of the outline of a Roman Theatre at the Gosbecks Archaeological Park. The Portfolio Holder gave details of the plans for that site, working in partnerships such as with Reading University. Progress would be made, including the use of virtual display augmentations. The Archaeological Park was included within the Cultural Strategy and the University of Durham was working to examine the site's Iron Age heritage. Geophysical surveying had been carried out and was being analysed. The University intended to use this work to feed into an application for funding to carry out a national study of Iron Age heritage. New Berechurch Dyke interpretation boards had been installed and gave information on the Iron Age heritage in that area, and the Portfolio Holder gave her support to the idea of a heritage trail, with information boards, for Monkwick.

A Panel member asked if a lexicography could be published to cover city status issues, explaining what is meant by terms such as 'city centre', which the Council tends to use to describe the traditional centre of Colchester, rather than modern economic centres which have arisen. Also highlighted was the need to be clear about whether areas fell within the area of different funding schemes. Eight Ash Green was within the Town Deal boundary,

which precluded it from applying for funding from the Rural Prosperity Fund, even though it had received nothing from the Town Deal funding.

The Portfolio Holder laid out the complexities caused by definitions varying between different projects and schemes and agreed that it was important to discuss and agree clear definitions. The Panel were told that this would involve officers, Cabinet colleagues and other elected members. The Leader argued that the Council should define boundaries for funding applications as possible, to seek a maximisation of potential funding awards.

The Panel discussed the desirability of advertising local attractions to neighbouring areas, with Panel and Portfolio Holder agreeing that it was important to capture visitors from the areas around Colchester. The Council and its partners were keen to look at how to turn visits into repeat visits. The digital strategy was an important part of this, including phone and electronic advertising.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder for her participation and underlined the importance of the Cultural Strategy, with many players and partners working together to promote cultural offerings in Colchester.

394. Work Programme 2022-2023

RESOLVED that the work programme for 2022-2023 be noted and approved.

SCRUTINY PANEL

3 March 2023

Present:-

Cllr Willetts (Chair), Cllr Laws, Cllr Lilley, Cllr McCarthy,
Cllr Scordis, Cllr Smith

Substitute Member:-

Also in Attendance:-

Cllr T. Young

395. Cabinet or Portfolio Holder Decisions called in for Review

Call in: Review of Saturday Household Drop-off Service

The Chairman explained the process for the consideration of this item and reminded the Panel that the questions and deliberations must be limited to the points raised within the call-in, and explained the options open for the Scrutiny Panel to potentially choose regarding the matter under consideration.

Councillor Tim Young attended and, with the permission of the Chairman, addressed the Scrutiny Panel to support the call-in, noting that he had only seen this decision had been taken when it was formally published via email. Councillor Young stated that the points raised in the call-in were inarguable, that no consultation had been held with residents and that some consultation should have been carried out with staff, residents and councillors. Greenstead had received this service for over 30 years and Councillor Young argued that the service had worked very well, had been environmentally friendly and had reduced fly tipping and increased safe disposal of bulky items. Councillor Young asked if Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, had taken these things into account and asked that the Portfolio Holder reconsider the decision and seek a compromise. Councillor Young urged to consider the call-in favourably.

Councillor Lissimore attended, as a visiting councillor, and addressed the Scrutiny Panel to explain her call-in of the decision in question. Councillor Lissimore asked why the Portfolio Holder had rejected the initial stage of a mediation meeting to discuss the decision and call-in.

Councillor Lissimore noted that the current financial situation was very hard, and her experience of this as Portfolio Holder for Resources in the 2021-22 municipal year, but argued that it was wrong to abolish Council schemes without consultation or seeking to identify the implications. Councillor Lissimore argued that this decision would hit those without vehicles and/or those on low incomes who could not afford licensed waste removal services or could not use the Essex County Council sites for waste disposal. Fly tipping was a potential alternative to which some people might turn.

The current system was described as offering 45 locations for waste collection by the Council, on average collecting around five tonnes per week. Councillor Lissimore asked where this would now go, whether to tips or to be fly tipped, with potentially more car journeys now needed to facilitate disposal. £25k was a relatively small saving but,

Councillor Lissimore argued, this would lead to increased fly tipping and pressure on other Council services. Councillor Lissimore requested that the service be retained whilst the effect of changes to the garden waste collection service were analysed, with consultation carried out with residents, officers and councillors.

A Panel member raised questions regarding how the County Council had implemented recent changes to its bookable waste tip service, and how they it had addressed the points raised by Councillor Lissimore with regard to the decision under consideration by the Panel as the subject of this call-in. The Chairman advised that this would be a question for the County Councillor, and not for this meeting or for Councillor Lissimore, as she was appearing before the Panel as an elected member of Colchester City Council, rather than in her capacity as an elected member of Essex County Council [ECC]. The Panel member argued that it would help the Panel to consider the issue if it were to hear how another local authority had approached a similar issue. Councillor Lissimore posited that it would benefit the Council to look at how ECC had carried out its consultation before making an evidence-based decision. ECC had carried out a pilot trial of proposed changes and had collected data before making its decision. The Chairman again emphasised that Councillor Lissimore was appearing before the Panel as an elected member of the City Council and could only be expected to answer questions relating to this call-in, in her capacity as a City Council councillor. The Panel was advised by the Chairman that it may wish to ask Councillor Goss what research he had done prior to making his decision, including any consultation of ECC which might have been carried out, but should not direct questions on ECC matters to Councillor Lissimore.

Councillor Martin Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, addressed the call-in and explained that ECC had been sent the proposal at officer level, for consideration. No response had been received, even after chasing several times. City Council had been spoken to, to discuss the use of the service and the data related to it. The current scheme had been provided and funded as using staff overtime to run, with difficulties in getting officers to work on it, leading to a reliance on agency staff. Costings had been assessed and a hard decision had to be taken, entwined with a second decision which itself entailed making a £60k saving. There was no budget to deliver the service, which was shown in the information circulated when Council considered the 2023-24 Budget.

It had been considered that consultation was not merited, as only around 120 people (out of a population of around 193k) used the service each year, which was far less than 1% of the local population. The freighter service was little used, either for residual or garden waste. Items which were collected by the service were sent to landfill, so the service did not encourage recycling.

Members were reminded that the bookable collection service for bulky waste was a separate service, and not the same as this freighter service, where people had to bring their waste to specific locations, which meant that almost all users of the service would need to use a vehicle.

Fly tipping had reduced over recent years, and waste could be taken to recycling centres, with alternative options available. The Portfolio Holder noted that changes to ECC's waste services had had knock-on effects upon Council waste services.

The Portfolio Holder explained that he had declined the offer of mediation as he had wanted to discuss this matter in public, rather than in a private mediation session, to aid in transparency and good governance via public scrutiny. The Portfolio Holder argued that no

councillors had given any alternatives to ending the service. Any reductions in service were regrettable, but Cabinet had to make difficult decisions, especially regarding non-statutory services like this one.

The Chairman emphasised that the Panel was not tasked with scrutinising the 2023-24 Budget at this meeting, but was constituted to examine the specific decision regarding this waste service.

The Panel noted that under 1% of the local population used this waste service, and the Portfolio Holder's argument that this meant that consultation was not merited. The Portfolio Holder was asked what Cabinet's view was, regarding the level of service use which would mean that consultation would be carried out regarding any changes or service losses, whether such consultation would be carried out, for example, if more than 1% of local residents used a service, or more than 5%. The Portfolio Holder answered that he could not give the view of Cabinet as a whole, or the Leader, on this, but that there was no policy set to dictate that consultation was necessary when considering changes to services used by over a certain percentage of the population. It was asked whether there was any content in the constitution which covered consultations, and the Chairman explained that there was no materiality bar set within the constitution, regarding consultations. The Portfolio Holder explained that large-scale consultation had been carried out on the draft Strategic Plan earlier in the year. Workshop feedback indicated that residents were open to changes in waste services.

A Panel member argued that it would have been worth asking the views of residents using the service, with councillors from different parties unhappy with the decision. It was suggested that the Panel should recommend that more consultation be carried out. In conjunction with other changes, such as the introduction of a booking system at the local tip, it was argued by one member that fly tipping would increase and would lead to increased costs to the Council, associated with addressing the fly tipping. The Portfolio Holder explained that fly tipping rates had recently decreased significantly. Regarding the booking of tip appointments, the Portfolio Holder explained that Suffolk had operated such a service since the pandemic, with success.

The Portfolio Holder explained the under-use of the freighter service, with average loads only taking a tenth of a van for garden waste and around a third for residual waste. This meant the service cancellation would not affect many.

The projected £25,369 saving was discussed, with the Portfolio Holder explaining that it was expected to be delivered, without any increase in costs relating to fly tipping. Signposts would be given for other disposal options, including tips and a cost saving was now predicted of around £34k.

A Panel member argued that the Portfolio Holder should have agreed to mediation and potentially have held an all-member briefing and issued notice to the press. The Portfolio Holder was asked how residents could afford to purchase waste collection services, and where the service users were based within the area. The Portfolio Holder suggested that councillors could use their locality budgets to help fund collections, and this had been done in the past. Management agents or resident associations could also assist with funding. The 120 users per year was an average, and there was no area-by-area data on their locations, although data is captured on weight of waste collected from each location. The majority of data used was from last year, with an average tonnage collected of around one tonne of garden waste per lorry, and some collections collecting less than one and a half tonnes of residual waste. A Panel member noted that there was no suggestion in the

decision that some areas used the service more, and that any thought had been given to retaining a service for areas which used it more heavily. Another member explained that the vehicles visited multiple wards, which made it impossible to collect data specific to Council wards or areas.

The Chairman addressed the points stated within the call-in request and gave his view that whilst the points alleging a lack of consultation could be definitively considered, the other points made were subjective ones and subject to individual opinion. Regarding lack of public consultation, the Chairman acknowledged that the percentage usage was very low, but made the point that little-used services could still be vital for those who used them. If the expectation of consultation were to be waived, the Panel were asked to consider whether it wished to make a recommendation that Cabinet produce a policy or set of guidelines to guide when consultation was or wasn't appropriate, rather than just relying on individual portfolio holders' views.

A member of the Panel raised a motion that the Panel should immediately confirm the Portfolio Holder's decision, on the grounds that elected members had been given the opportunity to object to this action when the 2023-24 Budget had been approved at Full Council. The Panel member argued that it was the Portfolio Holder's right to decide whether consultation was necessary or not and that, with less than 1% usage rates across the area, it would have been prohibitively difficult to identify users of the service. Further to this, the Panel member argued that the other points raised in the call-in had been dealt with, including that which related to staff consultation. The motion was seconded, but fell, with two votes in favour and four votes against.

Another Panel member expressed the view that consultation on such decisions was always desirable, with the Cabinet system [of council administration] often being accused of not involving councillors or residents in decision making. The service users were members of the public, and the Panel member highlighted the duty of the Council to help members of the public. A further Panel member acknowledged that a Budget amendment could have been tabled, but also argued that the Portfolio Holder could have briefed councillors and explained the situation and decision being considered. The Panel discussed whether parish councils could have been consulted.

The Scrutiny Panel discussed what concerns/reasons should be given, were the decision to be referred back to the Portfolio Holder for further consideration. The Panel considered whether to recommend the drafting of a policy or guidelines on how to approach consultation and whether it was needed, and whether there needed to be a clearer understanding of the issues at play by portfolio holders. The Panel then considered the concerns regarding potential implications, such as the potential for increases in fly tipping. Members argued that the decision report should have included data analysis and detail regarding expected financial implications, even if no extra costs were expected.

The Panel considered whether it wished to raise a concern regarding point four of the call-in [Will affect those most vulnerable who do not have access to a vehicle]. Councillor Lissimore agreed that it was difficult to identify the service users, given the small number of them, but suggested that the service could be run for a year and data gathered as to who used it, asking operatives to collect this. Councillor Lissimore suggested that service users could be consulted about likely effects on fly tipping, were the service to be cancelled. The Chairman emphasised that it was the Panel's duty to scrutinise how the decision was taken, rather than the substance of the decision and/or how to solve the problems which the decision aimed to address.

The Scrutiny Panel agreed that it wished to raise no concerns regarding points five and six of the call-in [claims that the decision would increase vehicle journeys to tips and would increase use of domestic waste collection services] as there was no evidence to show these would be outcomes of the decision.

RESOLVED that the decision WAS-002-22 [Review of Saturday Household Drop-off Service] be referred back to the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, for further consideration, with the recommendation that the Portfolio Holder addresses the following concerns: -

- (a) That the decision had not been subject to consultation and the Panel was concerned that there did not appear to be a policy or formal guidance to guide Cabinet and individual portfolio holders as to how to approach consultations and in what circumstances they should be carried out;
- (b) That the potential for increased fly tipping which may be caused by this decision has not been addressed, that more data analysis of the likelihood of this happening should have been conducted and content included in the decision report to lay out the expected effects and additional costs to the Council, even if it no increase in fly tipping or Council costs is expected.

SCRUTINY PANEL

14 March 2023

Present:- Cllr Willetts (Chair), Cllr Lissimore, Cllr Lilley, Cllr McCarthy, Cllr Scordis, Cllr Smith

Substitute Member:- Councillor Sunnucks for Councillor Laws

Also in Attendance:- Councillor King, Councillor McLean

396. Work of the One Colchester Partnership

Councillor Lilley (by reason of being the coordinator of a local neighbourhood watch and of being a member of a local speed watch group) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).

The Chairman explained the background to the item, which had originated from past scrutiny of the Safer Colchester Partnership which, as an organisation, now sat within the One Colchester Partnership [OCP]. The Scrutiny Panel wished to conduct a scrutiny session at a higher level, to examine the OCP itself.

Tracy Rudling, Chief Executive [CEO] of Community360 [C360], and Chairman of the OCP, gave a brief background to the OCP. The Partnership had formed initially as the Health and Wellbeing Board in 2012; a coalition of the willing, working at a strategic level and including input on clinical matters as well as housing and employment. The structure of the OCP was outlined, with a Strategic Board and a Delivery Board, with links to partner organisations. The OCP response to Covid had been critical work, and the OCP's dispersed leadership model of governance was highlighted and explained, using a data/intelligence-led approach to target resources at where they were most needed, whilst providing effective governance over use of funding, through asset-based development.

Jessica Leonard, C360, explained the OCP's cross-sectional working, implementing projects where needed, such as on the cost of living crisis, helping organisations build on their capacities. The OCP Hub had, in the past year, extended its opening hours, especially in the evening and on weekends, and was used as a warmth hub, collaborating with a range of organisations and societies. Over 4,000 hours had been put into supporting people. The slideshow presentation showed a number of the main achievements during 2022-23.

Louise Irons, C360, explained the work of the OCP Funding Panel, including the funds available and the sourcing of matched-funding and sharing of ideas, insights and networking. £1.72m of funding had been provided to organisations and projects in 2022-23.

The Community Safety Delivery Board [CSDB] was described, with its statutory nature and including its background and duties. This used to be named the 'Safer Colchester Partnership.' The Panel were told why this was adapted into the CSDB, as part of the OCP, and were given the wider implications and factors with which this dealt.

Chief Inspector Colin Cox, Essex Police District Commander, listed the safety priorities which had been set, and included tackling organised crime (especially drug trafficking), anti-social behaviour, violent crime, domestic abuse and other hidden harms, and violence against women and girls. The Chief Inspector explained the Essex Force Plan, and its 'Prevent, Respond, Investigate' approach. An overview was given for recent operations conducted in pursuit of the Force's priorities, including work to educate businesses to spot, report and prevent potential harms, such as child criminal exploitation. The Police had worked with partner organisations to raise awareness of violence against women and girls, such as at the University Freshers' Week. Work was also conducted with licensees, the S.O.S. Bus and street pastors to reduce crime in the night-time economy. Regular, high-visibility patrols were targeted at different areas of Colchester for short lengths of time. A pop-up police station had also been operated during the Christmas period and a Public Space Protection Order had been introduced to tackle vehicular crime.

Lucie Breadman, Strategic Director, gave an overview of campaigns to make a difference, for example in seeking to improve public safety. Partnership had been key to many successful funding bids.

The One Colchester representatives were asked to describe the alternative models of governance to the one of dispersed leadership which had been employed by the Partnership, and whether these had been considered and whether it was possible that the leadership could become too dispersed and the Partnership become too unwieldy. Tracy Rudling, CEO of C360, gave assurances that One Colchester worked well with the current leadership model, with strength in depth from key people being able to cover each other's responsibilities when necessary. The previous model used to be less multi-disciplinary, with a number of different ways of working tried, organically evolving to produce the current arrangements which had been found to be more efficient and effective. The full range of partners participated in the Delivery Board, rather than the Strategic Board. The Strategic Board sat above the Delivery Board, and the Community Safety Delivery Board [CSDB, formerly the 'Safer Colchester Partnership'], and a range of sub-groups were used to conduct specific work assigned by the Strategic Board in a 'task and finish' manner.

The Panel asked for detail as to how One Colchester was funded, and how funds were held, accounted for and audited. The CEO of C360 explained that funds were held in accordance with the Partnership Agreement, with most held and audited within the accounts of C360. For transparency, any voluntary sector or hyper-local funding was shared out with the appropriate partners. The partnership approach was for the Funding Panel [voluntary sector partners, businesses, Essex County Council and Colchester City Council] to discuss and have a say on the disbursement of funds. An example had been that place-based funding had been taken on from the Lottery Fund, to go into work on helping improve quality of life for those dealing with dementia. An extension to this funding had recently been granted. Around 25 different funding pots were held by C360 on behalf of the One Colchester Partnership, including some which were audited as restricted funds for specific purposes. These weren't held separately to the C360 accounts, but sat as restricted funds within those accounts. Panel members requested that the account details relating to One Colchester funds be circulated to them after the meeting, to show how the partnership operated financially. Tracy Rudling, CEO of C360, agreed to provide this information to Owen Howell, Democratic Services Officer, who would circulate it to members of the Scrutiny Panel.

A Panel member raised concern that mental health improvements had not progressed far via One Colchester's work, noting that the NHS had representation on the Board of One

Colchester, but that there wasn't a representative present for the NHS's mental health services. The CEO of C360 explained that mental health service providers had recommended the work of One Colchester. The charity Mind operated a regular café at the C360 Hub in the centre of Colchester and there were discussions ongoing relating to the potential for C360 staff to be seconded to support organisations providing mental health support services. It was an ongoing issue that more support was needed, but the CEO of C360 detailed some of the mitigating work already underway to address the problem.

Laura Taylor-Green, Director of North East Essex Alliance, explained that the Alliance had been the commissioning group, with mental health and suicide prevention as a priority. High rates of suicide in the area had led to the prioritisation of work to reduce this. An all-age approach was taken to mental health work, including with parents, carers, schools and other education providers. One Colchester oversaw a place-based strategy in this area, with an integrated neighbourhood approach and multi-agency model to cover all of Colchester and Tendring. Colchester was split into three areas, where partners combined resources to address issues such as mental health improvement, housing and antisocial behaviour. The model for this was not currently completed, but full functionality was expected by this time next year. Not all issues could be addressed in a single year, but the Alliance and One Colchester would be in a better position to address their main priorities within the year. A detailed approach to addressing suicide rates was carried out under the Essex Suicide Prevention Board, via the Alliance and One Colchester. The Panel gave the view that data should be evidenced, and used by One Colchester to explain how it sought to address mental health issues and to reduce suicide rates. the Director of North East Essex Alliance agreed to pick up this point with the Chair of the Essex Suicide Prevention Board.

A Panel member asked how the available budget for One Colchester had doubled and from where the funding had come. The CEO of C360 explained that the Integrated Care Board had brought domain funding into the Partnership, with place-based lottery funding also being obtained. As partners saw One Colchester working well, more organisations contributed funding to use on hyper-local work.

Answering questions as to the data collected and used by One Colchester, the CEO of C360 explained that data was collected on a ward level, and asset mapping was at a postcode level. Examples were given to show the granularity of issues reported. A concern was that ward-level was not granular enough, especially in large or diverse wards, and could potentially miss areas of need. Collecting data relating to assets or referrals at a postcode, or street level, was more effective. The level of data collection granularity varied between partners, with the Police working at a ward or neighbourhood level, and C360 collecting data at the level of six-digit postcodes. Much data collected was at the level of specific individuals.

The Panel asked questions as to the relationship between One Colchester and the Council, and as to ways in which the Council could provide better support. Tracy Rudling, CEO of C360 gave assurance that the relationship was better than ever, in her experience of the past thirty years. Partnership working levels were excellent. One way in which work could improve would be for all partners to look beyond their individual powers and find ways to address issues together, in communities. Much work had been done to understand how this could be done and implemented.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council, thanked the One Colchester representatives and emphasised how well-developed partnership working was in the Colchester area, bringing a focus and scope that couldn't otherwise be achieved. Colchester did well in applying for

and winning funding. If funders such as the NHS showed that they saw potential in Colchester, this would make additional funding available. The Leader outlined work going on to address how refugees in the area were being treated.

A Panel member asked what metrics were available, relating to the aim and work to narrow gaps between the most deprived areas and the rest of Colchester, and whether they showed a narrowing of the differences. The CEO of C360 stated that differences had not narrowed, primarily due to the cost of living crisis. One Colchester aimed to support deprived communities in levelling up, improving employment and meeting living costs.

The Chairman emphasised the complexity of the One Colchester organisation and posited that, whilst the Panel should accept that it was not possible to gain complete assurances regarding performance, it was possible to gain a certain level of assurance. The Panel noted the importance of wide-ranging partnership working and praised the One Colchester Partnership for its work.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Panel; -

- (a) Requests to see the accounting information for the Partnership, split away from the full accounts of Community 360
- (b) Receive data relating to suicide rates, and would consider how to scrutinise One Colchester plans to reduce rates.

397. Briefing by Councillor Andrea Luxford-Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure

Councillor Andrea Luxford-Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure, thanked the team of officers who had been working with her on matters within her portfolio and explained what elements of her portfolio would not be covered in the briefing, as they were dictated by national legislation.

The Local Plan had been a key part of the work from this year, as well as a significant amount of work being done regarding the Tendring/Colchester Borders Garden Community [TCBGC] project, alongside Tendring District Council [TDC] and Essex County Council [ECC]. All partners were committed to delivering this project successfully, and the Portfolio Holder underlined her commitment to preserving the principles under which the Council had signed up to the project: Deliverability, sustainability and viability. The different workstreams were carried out with Cabinet colleagues and officers.

Regarding the TCBGC, the Portfolio Holder gave the view that there needed to be a cap on the number of houses built prior to completion of the link road and the addressing of certain viability questions. New infrastructure was vital to support the new development, but it was pointed out that the Council only had one vote in decisions, along with TDC and ECC.

The Portfolio Holder explained that she had not been able to support the proposals for development at Marks Tey, and that the Colchester area was now safer from prospective speculative development now that the Local Plan had been approved and was in place. The benefits of neighbourhood plans were extolled, and the Panel were informed that a number of these were progressing. A number of supplementary planning documents [SPDs] had been adopted or were being drafted, including adoption of an SPD on affordable housing, and ongoing consultation on an SPD regarding biodiversity. An SPD to

cover shop design was also under consideration.

The Portfolio Holder outlined the current and ongoing infrastructure audit, paying credit to Councillor Andrew Ellis for his work to commence the audit during his time as Portfolio Holder for Housing, and his ongoing work on the subject. . A range of issues affecting Colchester were described, including the area's infrastructure deficit. Section One of the Local Plan had assumed that funding would be provided for dualling work on the A120, but no commitment had been received for this and central Government would need to be pushed on this. The Portfolio Holder noted that Section 106 developer contributions could not be set retrospectively, which meant that it was important to know what infrastructure was missing, in order to ensure S106 contributions could be set appropriately.

Two planning appeals, in Tiptree and Wivenhoe, had recently been determined in the Council's favour. The Council was outperforming most local authorities in regard to enforcement. The Council's team was doing an excellent job.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in the area included the A12 and the National Grid's East Anglian Greening Project. Simon Cairns was praised for his work on supporting biodiversity mitigations. A review had been agreed by the National Grid on the offshore generation of power. National Government policy had been an issue and the Council needed to lobby MPs to get a change to Government's approach.

Regarding the National Planning Policy Framework consultations, the Portfolio Holder stated that developers were not in favour of the changes proposed, whilst local authorities and policy writers saw the changes as being positive.

City centre regeneration was part of the Masterplan, and the Portfolio Holder explained why it had been split into two streams. The consultation was about to commence on the Masterplan and an outline was given for this, and of the responses already received from the public via other channels. The Council was working with ECC on the County Council's Transport Strategy. This included on potential changes to Crouch Street, where ECC had returned to carry out additional consultation. The Portfolio Holder explained that she was against the proposed changes on Crouch Street, such as the proposal to fill in the underpass.

Members of the Panel voiced their approval of the way in which the Portfolio Holder had worked to deliver the Tendring/Colchester Borders Garden Community [TCBGC], and had provided explanations and information to elected members, relating to the complex processes involved. Many different briefings had been held to inform on the situation and the work carried out by the Portfolio Holder. A Panel member asked the Portfolio Holder for her view on the garden community principles, citing concern about the recent blurring of those principles, especially regarding the new link road, and asking how strictly they were being kept to. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that a set of principles had been agreed upon, on top of those relating to the Town and Country Planning Association principles. She had held reservations about initial ideas for a delivery corporation and explained that work continued to deliver against the principles put in place, but was doubtful that this would be entirely possible to achieve.

A Panel member praised the Portfolio Holder's understanding of planning, business, and land value uplift issues, and asked if she was receiving sufficient and objective support from officers and to give details as to any risks expected to arise and potential mitigations. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that she was receiving the necessary support from officers, and explained that her concerns lay with ECC, who having identified a problem, asked

Homes England for funding to cover the shortfall identified and a time extension, to reflect the disruption from the Pandemic. The extra time request had been granted, but Homes England refused to provide additional funding. ECC could only therefore commit to building the new link road to a certain point [to Allens Farm]. The Portfolio Holder explained she had concerns regarding land acquisition and progressing the road. Requests for information from ECC had not yielded all necessary information, with commercial sensitivity cited as the reason for documentation being withheld. The Portfolio Holder raised her concern that a past contract had been signed by the Council without details being given, and a further contract was to be signed without details being provided by ECC. The Portfolio Holder argued for a cap on the number of homes to be sold prior to completion of the link road, and for getting full information on projected road usage of different types. Other challenges were identified including negotiations with one local landowner, and the difficulty that Highways England had raised with joining the link road to the A120 in a way that addressed safety concerns. These raised questions as to the overall scheme's viability. Answering further questions, the Portfolio Holder gave her view that it felt as though there was a loss of control of the project by the Council, however caveating this by saying that this was not necessarily the view of officers, and that Cabinet were not all of this opinion.

More information was requested on the ECC Transport Strategy. The Portfolio Holder outlined how the Council was looking at this with ECC in work on master planning, and increasing transport routes as part of the work relating to the Town Deal projects. There was also the rapid transit system [RTS], but only as a single route. Overall, bus services were being cut back, hurting a number of areas. Solutions had yet to be identified and would be needed at a wider level than just for Colchester. It took a long time to receive any response from FirstBus regarding getting information or meetings. A Panel member praised the £2 bus ticket initiative and criticised the current poor service for rural areas. The Portfolio Holder argued in favour of setting a scheme of incentives and penalties to force service improvements.

The concern was expressed that the RTS would need pump priming and would likely not be self-financing for years. In answer to Panel questions, the Portfolio Holder expressed her wish for Colchester to be granted greater control, relating to an integrated Transport Authority for North Essex. This would mean much work, but was an interesting prospect.

A Panel member asked whether there was a strategy to ensure that roads under Council control would be maintained well. The Portfolio Holder explained that she did not have much information on this subject, and had not been a member of the Local Highways Panel for Colchester.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder, on behalf of the Panel, for her work and consistent briefing of fellow councillors.

398. Review of S106 Developer Contributions

The Chairman explained that this item had been added to the Panel's work programme following a request by Councillor Paul Smith, on behalf of Councillor William Sunnucks.

Karen Syrett, Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy, presented the report, covering issues and topics around the collection and use of S106 developer contributions. Much background information was covered, including legal guidance, national policy and local policies. Three statutory tests were required when setting S106 agreements. These covered whether it was necessary in order to make a development acceptable in planning terms, ensuring that the contribution was directly related to effects of the specific

development in question, and ensuring that any contribution was to be fair and related in scale to the development itself.

It was underlined that S106 contributions could not be used in order to address existing deficiencies, but only those to be caused by the development itself. National guidance was that a formulaic approach should not be taken to S106 contributions, although the Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy noted that, in some ways, it would help developers to know what to expect, but all S106 agreements had to be site specific.

A number of issues had been identified in the past year, with some already now mitigated after a review of the Council's processes. The Planning Advisory Service was a good starting point for improvements, with others shown in the report. Example S106 agreements were also included for reference.

The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy explained why the Council had not implemented the Community Infrastructure Levy [CIL]. This had been progressed in part, but at the time was not taken forward, as the desire to prioritise the delivery of affordable housing meant that CIL could not be implemented, as this would have taken priority instead. CIL currently worked in tandem with S106, where implemented. Current thinking was to proceed with S106 contributions and an infrastructure levy. Consultation on changes to the system were expected at any time, and this complex process would be piloted with a number of local authorities in the coming years.

An audit of an S106 matter was underway in the Stanway area. Any recommendations would be considered for implementation in building changes to the current system.

A Panel member gave examples of gains from S106 contributions and gave the view that the use of powers to set S106 contributions had previously been assessed to work better for Colchester than utilising the CIL system, but agreed that the CIL system should and must be looked at again and made use of, if it could be seen to be beneficial for Colchester. Concern was raised regarding developers reporting their finances in such a way as to avoid living up to S106 requirements. Some parish councils were leading pushes to ensure receipt of S106 contributions, but the Panel member argued that it was harder to get contributions for hyper-local schemes in unparished areas.

The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy was asked if the Council was spending all the S106 contributions to which it was entitled, whether any agreements 'timed out', and whether there was a process for swift use of contributions to prevent the loss of funds. The member noted that residents sometimes struggled to understand the process and asked if direction was available as to what project types could be covered by S106 agreements. The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy agreed that up-front identification of appropriate projects was important. More was done on this now than previously, including via the local infrastructure delivery plan and via Local Plan policies. A policy had been developed for Layer de la Haye, with councillors, residents and landowners. The positives of this were given and an up-front approach had been taken to its development, to prevent surprises. Reliance was placed on local councillors across Colchester to help update priorities, such as for the Local Plan.

The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy highlighted the large infrastructure deficit around Colchester, and the increase in demands on developers for contributions to mitigate development effects. The Council implemented long time periods for spending contributions, to avoid loss. The Local Infrastructure Plan had helped, with swifter

identification of projects which could combine S106 contributions to provide more new infrastructure. The system had been streamlined, including the use of Office 365 to improve processes, and a more strategic overview of S106 was now taken.

The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy was asked what would happen if councillors from a ward disagreed on priorities for S106 contributions and, for competing priorities, how affordable levels of S106 contributions were calculated to match viability assessments. Questions were also asked as to how much was gained by using an open-book method, and what happened if property prices increased over the time taken for developments. The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy explained that competing demands were identified at an early stage and councillors could recommend their preferred projects in the process. No system could resolve all competing demands, but officer advice would be drafted to reflect what would be most appropriate, according to the Local Infrastructure Development Plan [LIDP]. The Panel discussed what happened where multiple proposed projects were in line with the LIDP, and whether it was appropriate for officers to judge which would be most appropriate. The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy explained that officers had always been responsible for identifying appropriate projects. Projects were now specified prior to S106 contributions being agreed, with the Planning Committee then discussing whether the S106 projects were appropriate. An explanation was given of the tests and criteria applied when projects were assessed.

Local Plan policy ensured that all sites within the Plan were considered deliverable and developable, with developers having to confirm this, in order to be allocated. Open book assessments had not led to great success in challenging and increasing S106 contributions. Viability tests at the application stage had been the norm, but viability now had to be shown at an earlier stage of plan making, as the national approach to this process had changed. Some applications returned to renegotiate viability. Some then increased their affordable housing. If developer profits increased, this was within the context of developers considering developments as taking a risk, with potential loss and potential gain.

A Panel member raised his concern that Colchester had taken much development, and his view that infrastructure had not kept up. A further concern was raised that the Council was not capturing the uplift value of development land. The Panel member urged an articulation of what infrastructure was needed and how it would be obtained and argued that the system was hard on developers who did not know in advance the level of S106 contributions required. Detail was requested on the process for deciding on infrastructure needs.

The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy underlined that the process was within a policy/Plan-led system, with developers submitting applications and the Council expecting them to pay what the policy laid out. It was explained why the example given of site uplift wasn't expected, as it involved a site which had not been allocated for development. There was currently an infrastructure deficit in all parts of the Colchester area. The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy emphasised that planning should not be about taxation, but that planners were, more and more, having to try to address infrastructure deficits. S106 contributions could not be used to mitigate existing deficits, but only to prevent them from being worsened by new developments.

The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy was asked why a CIL was not used, with a Panel member suggesting that the infrastructure review be finished, then the results used when looking to put a CIL in place, putting requirements in place up-front to ensure delivery.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure had recently attended a seminar on CIL and advice had been given that CIL should not be progressed further at this point in time as movement on infrastructure levy provisions was expected in the near future. Regarding questions on the Garden Community, the Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy highlighted that information in Section One of the Local Plan and the Development Plan Documents covered the infrastructure requirements.

A Panel member criticised instances where City Councillors identified needs for contributions [regarding services and infrastructure within the County Council's remit] but where ECC did not apply for S106 contributions. Panel members asked whether the Council could do anything to show concern at potentially missed opportunities. The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy emphasised that ECC could not be formulaic in its approach to developer contributions, giving examples where it had not been able to require contributions.

The Panel discussed whether developers were too good at arguing to reduce S106 contributions, based on arguments of viability and affordability, or whether there were too few schemes being brought forward for which S106 contributions could be levied. The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy noted that a lack of S106 agreement had been used in some cases to refuse applications. Mixed results had been found at appeal, as inspectors were very strict on S106 issues and compliance with the statutory tests.

Infrastructure deficit work was underway city-wide, involving all statutory bodies and partners. This would be used to help inform viability work for the Local Plan, to show constraints and the work needed to address deficits going forward. Councillors, parish councils and community organisations were asked to identify projects appropriate for S106 contributions, and this was identified as something that should be improved upon. It was explained that the LIDP only covered Council functions, except where mixed-use facilities were involved.

A Panel member argued that the same evidence would be needed, whether feeding into a CIL or other infrastructure levy, positing that Colchester needed to achieve this and produce a case for raising funds to address infrastructure needs. The Panel member argued in favour of up-front viability appraisals, rather than later open-book arrangements. The Panel member noted that the ECC Developers' Guide, in section 5, had clear formulae for S106 agreements.

The Lead Officer for Planning and Place Strategy offered to provide, in the monthly report to councillors detailing available S106 monies, the Local Infrastructure Delivery Table (LIDP), for councillors to monitor and make suggestions. The Panel welcomed this offer.

The Panel discussed whether it wished to make recommendations on the report and its discussions. The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure offered to raise any recommendations made by the Panel, at future ECC Portfolio reviews.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that; -

- (a) The monthly report to councillors, detailing available S106 monies, includes the Local Infrastructure Delivery Table (LIDP);
- (b) A robust response be provided to Essex County Council, regarding the latest version of the County Council's Developers' Document;

- (c) Further support be given to the infrastructure audit;
- (d) A specialist officer be appointed to oversee S106 and the infrastructure audit.

RECOMMENDED to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure that, at their next meeting with Essex County Council's Portfolio Holder for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning, they raise the issue of liaison between the two councils regarding the setting of S106 contribution requirements on different developments.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Panel receives a report on what the process should be for collection of S106 funds, and to explain what items are collected.

399. Annual Scrutiny Report for 2022-23

The Chairman explained the purpose of this report and, should there be a need for additions following the Panel meetings on 14 and 15 March 2023, offered to agree any additions with the lead group members.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2022-23.

400. Work Programme 2022-23

RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2022-23 be approved.

SCRUTINY PANEL

15 March 2023

Present: - Councillor Laws, Councillor Lilley, Councillor McCarthy, Councillor Smith, Councillor Willetts (Chair)

Substitutions: - Councillor Pearson for Councillor Scordis
Councillor Sunnucks for Councillor Lissimore

Also present: - Councillors Fox and King

401. Portfolio Holder Briefing from the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability

The Chair explained that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability had sent her apologies for the meeting as she was unable to attend for reasons of ill health.

402. Portfolio Holder Briefing from the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste

The Chair explained that due to a misunderstanding Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, had not received notification of the meeting and accordingly his briefing would be rescheduled for early in the new municipal year.

403. City Status Update

The Panel received a report from the Strategic Director providing an update on the plans and the Council's approach to the benefits from the award of City Status. Lucie Breadman, Strategic Director, Lindsay Barker, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Place, and Matthew Brown, Economic Regeneration Manager, attended to present the report and assist the Panel.

The Strategic Director, together with the Economic Regeneration Manager, and Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, made a presentation to the Panel addressing:-

- The aims and objectives of the Year of Celebration.
- The activities scheduled for the Year of Celebration and timescales. This was wide ranging and did not just concentrate on the city centre. It included a

number of events in the rural wards such as the Layer Marney Opera Festival and the West Mersea Town Regatta.

- The tools available to help promote the Year of Celebration, such as the promotional stamps and the cityscape logo.
- The approach being taken with partners, particularly the Business Improvement District. The consensus with partners was that the approach should be to build on existing strengths, priorities and strategies , rather than establishing a new City Status Strategy and Action Plan.
- The benefits of City Status. It would raise aspirations, boost Colchester's image and reputation, give Colchester greater influence and demonstrate its importance in heritage terms. The BID had already reported that Colchester is appearing on new potential investment lists.
- Practical examples of change happening to the City Centre include the Town Deal and Levelling Up Fund projects. The Panel were shown projects focussing on heritage from this programme. The Town Deal and Levelling Up fund projects had a combined value of £40 million, excluding match finding, and were being treated as one programme.
- Some of the key Town Deal projects include the restoration of Jumbo, repairs and restoration of Holy Trinity Church so it could be brought back into use as a community hub, a number of public realm sites such as Holy Trinity Square and St Nicholas Square, and virtual reality tourism.
- The Town Deal projects include a heritage enriched walking route between Colchester Town Station and Firstsite, to improve first impressions of the city centre for those arriving at Colchester Centre Station, improved interpretation at St Botolph's Priory and improvements to the Roman Wall.
- The legacy of City Status. This would build on existing strengths and reflect the multi centre nature of modern Colchester. Recognition that this was about the whole of Colchester , with benefits for the historic core, urban and rural Colchester. The Local Government Association Peer Review Team believed that City Status put Colchester on the cusp of something great. Our strategic plans, priorities and collaborative approach with partners along with an ambitious approach aim to enhance the benefits of City Status. .

The Chair of the Panel stressed the need for a lexicography of terms given the differing possible meanings and interpretations of the word "City" in this context, which caused confusion. The Chair also noted that there were considerable overlaps between this item and other items the Panel was invited to consider, such as the Town Deal and the Levelling Up projects. The Panel needed to be able to look in more granular detail at the impact of each project. There was concern that each of the items was becoming in effect a scrutiny of the Strategic Plan and it became increasingly difficult to see whether each component was performing adequately.

Councillor King emphasised that there were project disciplines that required the project teams to show what was achieved against the objectives set for the Town Deal and Levelling Up projects. There were clear criteria for the objectives and outcomes of these projects against which progress could and would be measured. It was appreciated that these projects were enmeshed with City Status and whilst these projects would be subject to individual scrutiny, this item brought them together in an overall package. The Executive Director, Place, stressed that work

was underway to monitor the outcomes of these projects but that these were at an early stage.

The Chair sought clarification as to whether the Panel was being asked to scrutinise the whole of the Strategic Plan or to consider the additional opportunities that had arisen because of the award of City Status and if so then these needed to be clearly differentiated. Councillor King indicated that he accepted this point and of the need for the individual elements to be scrutinised in detail. However, it was still useful to consider more generally how the city was viewed and how this was changing as a consequence of the award of City Status.

In discussion members of the Panel sought clarification as to how the Year of Celebration would be promoted and marketed. For example would there be a social media campaign with partners and would hard copies of promotional material be made available for those who did not access social media and for use in neighbouring towns and other cities? The Strategic Director confirmed that marketing for the Year of Celebration was already underway and using a range of marketing media and tools. The joint marketing programme based on a shared vision was being led by the BID and was in an early stage of development. This would be key in helping come to an agreed view of what City Status meant for Colchester. There was still a place for hard copy advertising and marketing material and this would be provided, although increasingly venues such as stations were reluctant to take such material.

It was also suggested by members of the Panel that whilst there was a vision of what City Status could achieve, the challenge was to convert this vision into tangible results. In that context, the schedule of events was reassuring and this would be understood by residents in a way strategic visions for Colchester or detail about investment and finance would not be. The emphasis on the word “city” did not resonate with those in rural wards and tangible details about particular schemes was more likely to be understood and welcomed than an emphasis on vision. Concern was expressed by some members of the Panel that the Year of Celebration events were concentrated in the historic core and a number of key events, such as Rowhedge Regatta, were not included. The Town Deal and Levelling Up Funding were largely devoted to the historic centre and were not being used to address long standing problems outside the city centre, such as flooding in the Hythe.

The Strategic Director accepted the point in respect of rural communities and they met regularly with town and parish clerks. Considerable effort was made to engage with rural communities and other groups, such as young people, and to ensure that the benefits were felt across the wider city. In terms of the Year of Celebration events were not being excluded. Organisers of events could ask for them to be included in the Schedule of Events, and communications had been sent out inviting events to be put forward for inclusion in the Year of Celebration.

It was also emphasised that the Policy Panel had taken the view that the Year of celebration and City Status should include the whole of the City and should not concentrate wholly on the historic city centre.

Members of the Panel suggested ways in which public engagement could be boosted such as through a competition building on the celebration jam being created by Wilkin and Sons, making the images of the public realm improvements available on the Council's website, and producing an online guide to the history of Colchester which could be accessed for those visiting historic and heritage sites.

The Executive Director Place stressed that the Council was working at pace in order to visualise and bring the proposals to life for residents through concepts such as an interactive map. The Council was looking to engage with a local company who could use modern technology in this way to promote the changes planned for the City Centre.

Members of the Panel explored whether the Council was seeking to learn from the experiences of Chelmsford and Southend. The significance of the 2040 date was also questioned and it was suggested that 2043 or 2049 would be more historically significant dates to mark. The Strategic Director explained that the Council had consulted with Chelmsford and Southend and was also linking in with the Key Cities Network. In view of the circumstances that had led to its award of City Status, Southend was taking a different, more reflective approach.

The Panel also discussed how the Council was developing the skills base in the city. Whilst the growth that was being seen was encouraging, the lack of skills was a real issue. Colchester had a low wage economy and the only way to change this was to improve the skills base. The Annual Monitoring Statement showed the slow improvement of skills and the consequent improvement in wage levels had been a theme for the last decade. It had also been identified as an issue in the current and previous Strategic Plan.

The Executive Director agreed that this was a central issue and highlighted that skills development was a key strand of the Council's Economic Strategy. The Health Alliance were looking at skills issues as they saw it as one of the key determinants of health. It was frustrating that the Shared Prosperity Fund, from which Council had received funding, did not allow investment in skills until year 3. The devolving of responsibility for skills to a more local level was also a key issue in the devolution proposals currently being considered. It was suggested that the Scrutiny Panel could hold a one issue meeting on skills in the city in the new municipal year, to which relevant partners and guests could be invited to present and contribute.

In summary the Chair indicated that the report had been well received and indicated that it demonstrated that the work to build on the award of City Status was well underway, although it was noted that some of this work would have been undertaken notwithstanding the award. After considering the issues raised in the debate it was felt that the importance of a whole city approach should be stressed to Cabinet. There remained some concerns about the engagement with City Status in the rural areas of the city and of the benefits it would bring outside of the centre. Addressing the skills issue should also be a by-product of City Status and it was felt that the importance of this should be stressed to Cabinet. In addition the Panel considered that the City Status work was most effective when it concentrated on the practicalities and the delivery of specific plans and events, and that Cabinet should be encouraged to focus on that element.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The plans and approach already underway for City Status be noted.
- (b) The Panel's Work Programme for 2023-24 include a one item meeting on issues relating to the skills base within the city, with relevant partners invited to attend.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that:-

- (a) A Whole City approach be taken to the work on City Status to ensure that all residents feel involved and were able to take part in the Year of Celebration and that the benefits of City Status were felt across the whole city area.
- (b) The improvement of the skills base within the city be an essential part of City Status.
- (c) There be a greater emphasis and focus on detailed practical and deliverable plans and targets.

404. Town Deal Progress

The Panel received a report from the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Place, providing an update on the Town Deal programme. The report was the first annual progress reports to the Scrutiny Panel, following the Panel's meeting in November 2023 when it received an update on progress on the programme. Lindsay Barker, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Place, and Matthew Brown, Economic Regeneration Manager, attended to present the report and assist the Panel.

The Chair indicated that his principal interest was in the timescales and whether the projects were on track, especially given the challenges around the capital programme.

The Panel received a presentation from the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Place and the Economic Regeneration Manager. This set out:-

- The context for the Town Deal Programme.
- Progress on the projects which were generally progressing well with major milestones being met. Only one project had slipped significantly in terms of timescale.
- Cost inflation was having an impact but this was being managed and mitigated.
- Recent engagement activity. Engagement was at the heart of the programme and a considerable amount of engagement had been undertaken.
- Recent progress on key schemes including the Digital Skills Hub, Jumbo, Holy Trinity Church, Digital Working Hub and the cycling and walking route from East Hill to the University.

- More detailed information on those schemes rated as amber in terms of progress.
- The key risks, which were cost inflation and delays securing permissions and land acquisitions. There were effective mitigations in place to address cost inflation, such as seeking alternative sources of funding and tailoring schemes where necessary. In terms of delays on permissions and acquisition, sponsors and senior officers would engage to try and expedite matters.

In discussion, the Chair sought further detail about the status of the amber projects and whether any were in serious danger of being rated red. Officers confirmed that nothing was in that position presently. Many were amber as they were awaiting clarification on costs. There was still a reasonable amount of time for the delivery of the projects, which had to be completed by 2026 and they had been staged in terms of delivery.

A member of the Panel indicated that similar assurances had been given on earlier projects, which had then run into difficulty. Concern was expressed about the serious cost pressures that some of the projects would face, particularly on building costs. This would be a particular risk for the Heart of Greenstead project, given the housing element of the project.

The Executive Director, Place, explained that not all projects were to be directly delivered by the Council. For example the Essex County Hospital scheme was being managed by Essex County Council and the City Council was providing a contribution. There was no risk to the Town Deal programme on those schemes. On the Heart of Greenstead project this was a community led project. The Town Deal team were discussing with the community what the Health and Wellbeing Hub, which was the Town Deal element of the scheme, would look like. There were a number of partners involved and if their ambitions about what could be achieved from the scheme could not be met, then they may need to make a greater contribution. Alternatively if further funding was not made available, the scheme may need to be scaled back. The housing delivery was not part of the Town Deal programme and was being funded through the Housing Revenue Account.

It was also suggested by a Panel member that the Digital Working Hub in Queen Street was a considerable investment with a comparatively low yield in terms of jobs created, when compared with other schemes such as the Digital Skills Centre. The Economic Regeneration Manager explained the figure given was net direct jobs created. This was a business incubation and growth centre and many more jobs would be created indirectly through the businesses it created and supported. It was suggested that the relevant part of the Appendix to the report be amended accordingly.

Councillor Fox, Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation, was invited to contribute and explained that this linked into the earlier discussion on skills. The Digital Skills Centre at the Wilson Marriage site would concentrate on getting people back into employment by developing their digital skills. Therefore it was easier to record direct employment that would result from its work. The Digital Working Hub was a business incubation unit that over the long term would create many jobs

through the scaling up of the business that it helped get established. Given the nature of the business it supported these were likely to be high value jobs.

A member of the Panel sought confirmation that the funding agreements and business cases were in the public domain. Financial appraisals should also be completed for each of the projects, although it was appreciated that some of the benefits leading from the schemes were social rather than financial. These would help capture the value of the assets at the conclusion of the programme. It was also suggested that some projects such as Heart of Greenstead would be easier to progress if the Council owned the land.

Officers explained that the Council was the Accountable Body for the Town Deal programme and there was a Heads of Terms agreement with government setting out the agreed outcomes, costs and timescales. These would be shared with the Panel. The Business Cases were agreed by government, the Town Deal Board and by Cabinet and were in the public domain. The scheme for Heart of Greenstead had changed since its original design in 2018 and was now focusing on the Community Health and Wellbeing Hub first, which was on land owned by the Council. The wider housing scheme would be developed on land owned by Notting Hill Genesis, a Housing Association, who had just undergone a change in management and it was anticipated that the sale of this land would progress once the new management team was established. It was a community led scheme and considerable effort had gone into setting up the correct governance arrangements and board membership. There was considerable involvement from partners, including the University and it would be a new model of provision for Colchester. It was always anticipated that it would take the full length of the Town Deal programme to deliver the scheme and ensure it delivered the right outcomes.

Councillor Fox offered a reassurance to the Panel that the Town Deal Board had a range of experience and skills, with representatives from the business, the community and government. There was a clear feeling that although there were issues such as cost inflation, the Board was addressing those issues and enabling the programme to progress. Government appeared to be satisfied with how Colchester was delivering on the programme.

The Panel sought clarification that the timescales on Holy Trinity Church were still compatible with the prospective tenant, and whether this would impact on the refurbishment grants of other churches. Officers explained that the prospective tenant, Community 360, were still very interested but would need reassurance that the building had been de-risked. They did not have the expertise to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding so the Council would do this and ensure the risks from occupancy were removed. Officers were aware of the need to synchronise the bids for funding to ensure they did not cut across one another and to avoid duplication.

It was also suggested that the CGIs created for the programme could be improved and that photoreal CGIs should be used. There were local firms who could provide much better images than had been used to date. If further resource was needed, this should be made available given the importance of the programme. Further consideration should be given to displays on hoardings or in neighbouring shops so that residents were better informed about the projects and the potential benefits.

Officers explained that the team had already made contact a leading CGI firm, who were interested in some form of partnership approach, subject to usual procurement processes. More generally work was underway to look at what technology was available to support the community engagement process through better visualisation.

In summary the Chair explained that the Panel was of the view that the programme had not deteriorated since it was last scrutinised. It appeared to be stable with the target dates largely being met. There was a good understanding of the risks and mitigating measures were being pursued where appropriate. It was suggested that a recommendation be made to Cabinet about the need to ensure appropriate resources were made available to help residents better understand the various projects in the city centre.

RESOLVED that the good progress made to date on the Town Deal be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that the presentation of the town centre projects be given greater prominence and that resources be made available to help residents better understand the projects in the city centre and the benefits that they would bring to the city and its residents.

The Panel resolved that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting for the following item as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

405. Turnstone Development - Colchester Leisure Park

This minute is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, including the authority holding the information).

SCRUTINY PANEL

24 May 2023

Present: -

Councillor Arnold, Councillor Laws, Councillor McCarthy, Councillor McLean, Councillor Rowe, Councillor Smalls, Councillor Willetts

Substitutions: -

None

Also present: -

405. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Darius Laws be appointed Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

406. Election of Deputy Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Dennis Willetts be appointed Deputy Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

6 June 2023

Report of Chief Operating Officer

Author Cezara Cosma
☎ 01206 508404

Title Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2023-2024

Wards affected All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Panel is invited to consider the Corporate Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Targets for 2023-2024.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 To scrutinise the Corporate KPI Targets for 2023-2024 as proposed in the report.

3. Reason for Scrutiny

- 3.1 To consider KPI targets for 2023-2024 as a key element of the Council's performance monitoring.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 It is proposed that the revised set of KPI measures in the table below be agreed and set for 2023-2024. The KPIs have been chosen to reflect our new financial circumstances and the new Strategic Plan for 2023-2026. They are grouped in a financial theme and themes that reflect the Strategic Plan.
- 4.2 The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan can be found at Appendix A.

Financial theme			
KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Council Tax collected	Monthly	97.65%	It is proposed that the target is increased from 97.50% to pre-covid level. Council Tax collection has remained strong during 2022-2023 at 97.81%
Business Rates (NNDR) collected	Monthly	98%	It is proposed that the target is increased from 95% to pre-covid level. NNDR collection has remained strong during 2022-2023 at 98.01%
HRA Rent collected	Monthly	98%	It is proposed to keep the current target for 2023-2024; current

			performance is only just meeting the target at 98.7%. Keeping the target at the current level will be a stretch and a challenge.
Leisure Centre income	Monthly	£6.5m for 2023-2024	This is a new indicator which measures the Leisure Centre income for 2023-2024. Target set to reflect the budget for 2023-2024.
Colchester Museums income	Monthly	£448k admissions income and £88.9k schools income	This is a new indicator which measures the Colchester Museums income for 2023-2024. Target set to reflect the budget for 2023-2024.
Bereavement services income	Monthly	£2,017k total income for 2023-2024	This is a new indicator which measures the Bereavement Services income for 2023-2024. Target set to reflect the budget for 2023-2024.
Garden Waste	Quarterly	Number of active subscribers 7053 (Q4 23-24 only)	This is a new indicator which measures the number of Garden Waste subscribers for 2023-2024. It is only measured in Q4 (Jan – Mar 2024) in line with the scheme going live in January 2024.
Capital Programme	Annually	80% of forecast against spend in the current financial year	This is a new indicator which measures the efficiency of managing our capital programme including schemes delivered by CCHL. The target for 2023-2024 has been set at 70% of spend to have matched the forecasting.

Strategic Plan – Respond to climate emergency theme			
KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Residual household waste per household	Monthly	354 kg	It is proposed to decrease the target from 346 kg to 354 kg for 2023-2024 in line with forecasted performance for 2022-2023. In 2022-2023 performance measured at 353.80 kg against the 346 kg target.
Household waste reused, recycled, and composted	Monthly	53%	It is proposed to decrease the target from 55% to 53% in line with forecasted performance for 2022-2023. In 2022-2023 performance measured at 52.08% against the 55% target.

Fly tipping incidents	Quarterly	2262 for 2023-2024	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the number of fly tipping incidents reported and cleared.
Trees planted	Quarterly	2000 trees	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the number of trees planted.
Improving biodiversity	Annually	Increase Grassland Wilding from 7.4 hectares to 8 hectares	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the increase in Grassland Wilding from 7.4 hectares to 8 hectares. It has been added to reflect the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Respond to the climate emergency</i> theme.
Achieving "Pathway to Net Zero" targets to 2030	Twice per year	Reduce our emissions to 5200 tonnes by October 2023 and to 5100 tonnes by March 2024	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the reduction of our emissions to 5100 tonnes by March 2024. It has been added to reflect the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Respond to the climate emergency</i> theme.

Strategic Plan – Deliver homes for the most in need theme

KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Affordable homes delivered (gross)	Quarterly	380 homes over three years (2023-2026)	It is proposed that the previous target is kept for the new 3 year period 2023-2026. The target includes the delivery of all affordable housing including Housing Association s106/non s106, Acquisitions, Council new build and First Homes.
Monitoring the number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households.	Monthly	3.0	It is proposed to increase the target from 2.9 to 3.0 households per 1,000. Performance in 2022-2023 measured at 3.59. This measure gives contextual information on current pressures as well as costs within the homelessness service. Demand for affordable housing is increasing as local private rent and housing costs increase. There is a shortage of suitable affordable family accommodation in Colchester.
Average time to re-let council homes	Monthly	28 days	It is proposed that the previous target of 28 days is kept for 2023-2024 as current performance is

			just meeting the target at 26.73 days for 2022-2023. Keeping the target at the current level will be a stretch and a challenge.
Repairs completed within target timescale	Monthly	95%	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the percentage of repairs completed within the target timescales. It has been added to reflect the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Deliver homes for those most in need</i> theme.
Percentage of homes that do not meet the decent homes standard	Annually	0%	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the percentage of homes that do not meet the decent homes standard. It has been added to reflect the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Deliver homes for those most in need</i> theme.
Customer satisfaction with latest repair	Monthly	90.5%	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the customer satisfaction with latest repair. It has been added to reflect the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Deliver homes for those most in need</i> theme.

Strategic Plan – Improve health, well-being, and happiness theme			
KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Time to process housing benefit and local council tax support new claims and changes	Monthly	HB – 4 days LCTS – 5 days	It is proposed the targets are increased for 2023-2024 from 5 days for HB and 6 days for LCTS. This will challenge the team to continue to match and exceed performance. The team achieved 2 days (average) for both HB and LCTS in 2022-2023.
Cost of living	Quarterly	DHP – £309 for 2023-2024 EHP – £57k for 2023-2024 (Amount to be confirmed)	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the Discretionary and Exceptional Hardship Payments spend. It has been added to reflect the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Improve health, well-being, and happiness</i> theme.
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	Quarterly	Total spend year to date Target for Spend on DFG: £1.1m (total spend inc. staffing) / 100 completed applications in 2023/24	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the DFG spend and completed applications. It has been added to reflect the 2023-2026 Strategic

		Approved amount Target for Approved applications at Year End: £350k / 35 applications for 2023/24	Plan <i>Improve health, well-being, and happiness</i> theme.
Sickness rate in working days	Monthly	Rolling 8 days	It is proposed the target is lowered to 8 rolling days from the current 7 days target as we are still experiencing an increase in short term sickness due to Covid. Performance in 2022-2023 measured at 9.10 days against the 7 days target.

Strategic Plan – Grow our economy so everyone benefits theme			
KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Additional Homes	Quarterly	920 homes	It is proposed that the previous target is kept for 2023-2024. This indicator is linked to the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Grow our economy so everyone benefits</i> theme.
Social value in procurement	Twice per year	70% of all (non-framework) contracts over £100k awarded to include social value benefits	This is a new indicator for 2023-2024 which measures the amount of social value gained on corporate contracts over £100k. It has been added to reflect the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Grow our economy so everyone benefits</i> theme.

4.3 **CBH KPI Targets.** The following KPI Targets have been determined and agreed by Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities and detailed in the Colchester Borough Homes new Medium Term Delivery Plan, approved at the Principal Liaison Meeting in February 2023 by the CBH Board and PFH for Housing and Communities.

- HRA Rent Collected
- Monitoring the number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households.
- Average time to re-let council homes
- Repairs completed within target timescale
- Percentage of homes that do not meet the decent homes standard
- Customer satisfaction with latest repair

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 5.1 Where required, specific Equality Impact Assessments have been conducted for policies and activities rather than for individual performance indicators.
- 6. Strategic Plan References**
- 6.1 Having a robust corporate performance monitoring framework with appropriate KPI's will contribute to the effective delivery of the Strategic Plan.
- 7. Consultation**
- 7.1 There are not any direct implications with regard to consultation.
- 8. Publicity Considerations**
- 8.1 The performance report contains measures for our key performance. Many of these are used to monitor the performance of our services, and as such these may be of public interest. The performance report and related information is published on the Performance section of the Council's website.
- 9. Financial implications**
- 9.1 The annual budget setting report considered separately by Cabinet will ensure there are appropriate resources to deliver the KPI targets for 2023-2024.
- 10. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications**
- 10.1 Some of the proposed KPI's will ensure effective performance monitoring of key areas which have a positive impact on Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety.
- 11. Health and Safety Implications**
- 11.1 This report has no direct implications with regard to Health and Safety.
- 12. Risk Management Implications**
- 12.1 There are no specific risk management implications associated with this decision.
- 13. Environmental and Sustainability Implications**
- 13.1 The KPI targets proposed for recycling and residual waste are examples of indicators of performance at tackling Environment and Sustainability issues. However, as work progresses in responding to the Climate Emergency Declaration, Cabinet may wish to consider if any additional corporate KPIs in this area are required.

Appendices

Appendix A. [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

Background Papers

Not applicable.

A City fit for the Future

Colchester City Council's
Three-Year Plan

April 2023 to April 2026



**Respond to the
climate emergency**

**Deliver Modern
Services for a
Modern City**

**Improve health,
well-being, and
happiness**

**Deliver homes
for those most
in need**

**Grow our economy
so everyone
benefits**

**Celebrate our city,
heritage and
culture**



Our city deserves the very best our Council can deliver.

Together with our partners we must respond to the challenges of our times whilst focussing on what matters most to the people of Colchester. To recognise the distinctive qualities of our rural and city life, our many communities and identities and our culture and heritage.

Our new Three-Year Plan continues to provide a framework, sense of direction and the key outcomes we will address, deliver or influence in the coming years.

Central to all we do will be the discipline and professionalism we can apply, with our partners. To ensure in the most challenging times for our country, as well as our city, that our finances are managed well, that we do all we can with and through others. That our sense of optimism, and ambition show in all we do, to make life better. As Councillors, officers and full Council, for all those that live, and work or visit the great City of Colchester.

Our Three-Year Plan will shape what we do and the outcomes we seek to achieve, mindful of the challenges we face in post Covid-19 world within a cost-of-living crisis.



Respond to the climate emergency

Priorities	Outcomes
Reduce our carbon footprint	Remain on track for the council to be net zero by 2030
Conserve and enhance our biodiversity	Improved biodiversity across all areas of the city by delivering the council's Woodland and Biodiversity Plan. This includes transforming Cymbeline Meadows into a nature reserve
Continue to be a leading council in our waste and recycling collections	Simplified waste and recycling services and progress towards government recycling collection targets of 70%

Deliver Modern Services for a Modern City

Priorities	Outcomes
Colchester Council and supporting organisations work together to a shared and ambitious vision for the future of our city	Closer and more effective work between Colchester City Council, Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited (CCHL) and Colchester Borough Homes (CBH)
Put communities, and their needs, at the heart of our vision and supporting local areas as they help shape and deliver the services which are most important to them	Colchester Borough Homes continues to deliver quality social homes and services for its tenants and leaseholders Land and building assets owned by the council are valued, and rationalised. Whether by sale, transfer to community partners and/or use in support of centre regeneration
Work closely with local partners, charities and organisations to add value (including but not only; Essex County Council, The NHS, The Garrison, and The University of Essex)	Work with Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd (CCHL) and Colchester Borough Homes (CBH), to ensure funding is in place to continue investment in the homes the council owns and commercial opportunities to increase income to support services for residents Deliver some of our services in a different way, working with our communities and residents to co-design service provision, where appropriate, in a community setting – putting residents and communities in the driving seat of what services they need and how they could be delivered





Improve health, well-being, and happiness

Priorities

Tackle the causes of inequality and support the most vulnerable people in Colchester

Work with residents and partners to address quality of life and issues of happiness

Outcomes

Improving the lives of Colchester residents and those most in need, working with the NHS, charities and others

Reducing the challenges of the cost of living crisis for Colchester residents
Improving the sense of wellbeing of our residents



Deliver homes for those most in need

Priorities

Increase the number, quality and types of homes on offer

Prevent or assist those facing homelessness

Increase affordable housing using buildings or land the council own

Outcomes

Building more council homes to a high standard with improved energy efficiency

Ensuring developers apply beautiful and sustainable design to all house builds across the city

Increasing the number of affordable homes in-line with government targets (seeking 30% where we build)





Grow our economy so everyone benefits

Priorities

Work with partners to create a vibrant city which people want to live in and visit, whilst attracting investment

Outcomes

Developing a longer-term vision and plan to make the most of Colchester's modern city for the benefit of all residents, including young people

Continuing to develop Tendring and Colchester Borders Garden Community and ensure Colchester communities benefit from the project as much as possible

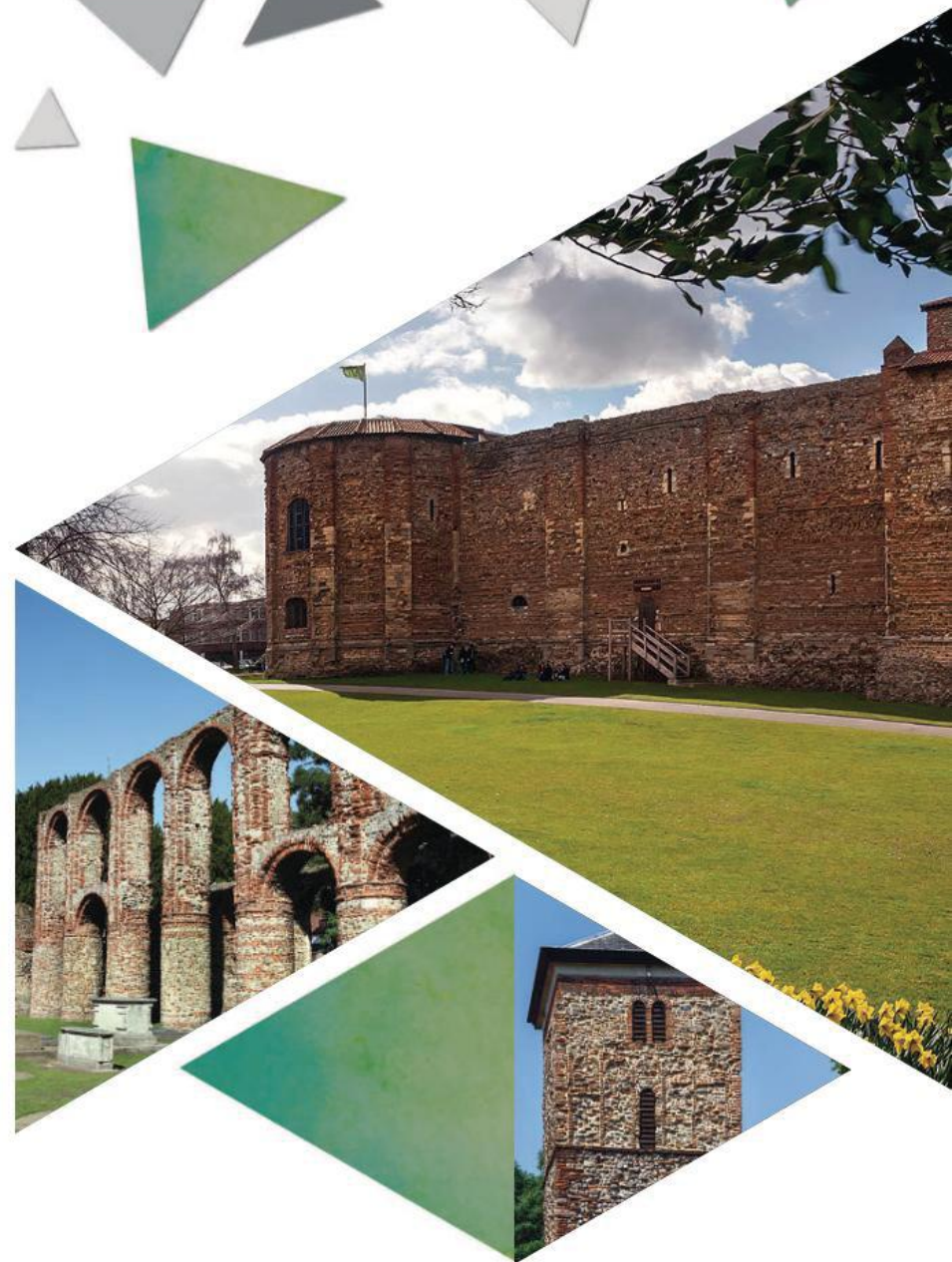
Delivering the Town Deal projects to improve the lives of residents and support businesses

Working with partners, such as Colchester Business Enterprise Agency (Colbea) and the North Essex Economic Board to support local businesses to start up, thrive and grow, whilst making the most of the opportunities that come with modern city status



Celebrate our city, heritage and culture

Priorities	Outcomes
Strengthen Colchester's tourism sector and welcome more visitors each year	Delivering a 12-month programme of events and activities across the city in 2023, called a Year of Celebration
To make our city a better place in which to live and work and visit	Confirming a Masterplan for a transformed, attractive and more accessible city centre that makes the most of our public spaces, heritage and cultural assets (in partnership with Essex County Council) Marketing Colchester as a destination



6 June 2023

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Owen Howell ☎ 282518
Title	Work Programme 2023-24		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the current Work Programme 2023-2024 for the Scrutiny Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year. As this is the first meeting of the Panel in 2023-24, the Panel is asked to identify specific issues, matters or areas of Council operations which it wishes to scrutinise during the 2023-24 municipal year.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and approve the contents of the Work Programme for 2022-2023, or request amendments, additions and/or deletions.
- 2.2 The Panel is asked to identify specific issues, matters or areas of Council operations which it wishes to scrutinise during the 2023-24 municipal year, and to provisionally schedule these items, subject to feedback from relevant officers on any issues which may affect reporting timescales.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Panel's work programme evolves as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting the opportunity is taken for the work programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances. The draft work programme for 2023-24 is appended to this report. This contains the items which are reviewed each year by the Panel.
- 3.2 The Forward Plan of Key Decisions is included as part of the work programme for the Scrutiny Panel, and this is included an **Appendix A**.

4. Standard References

- 4.1 There are no particular references to publicity or consultation considerations, or financial, equality, diversity, human rights, community safety, health and safety, environmental and sustainability or risk management implications.

5. Strategic Plan References

- 5.1 Scrutiny and challenge is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2020-2023 priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the strategic themes of:

- [Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability](#)
- [Creating safe, healthy and active communities](#)
- [Delivering homes for people who need them](#)
- [Growing a fair economy so everyone benefits](#)
- [Celebrating our heritage and culture](#)

- 5.2 It should be noted that the Council has now approved a Strategic Plan for 2023-2026. This section of the Work Programme report will be updated accordingly, for future meetings, to cover the new Strategic Plan priorities and content.
- 5.3 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self-governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

Appendices

Appendix A – Scrutiny Panel Work Programme, 2023-24

Appendix B – Forward Plan of Key Decisions: 1 June 2023 – 30 September 2023

Work Programme for 2023/24

Scrutiny Panel meeting – 6 June 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 1 June 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2023-24 2. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel meeting – 4 July 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 29 June 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year End 2022/23 Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action Plan 2. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel (Crime and Disorder Committee) - 19 September 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 14 September 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)
Scrutiny Panel – 3 October 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Briefing – 28 September 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Housing and Communities, if possible] 2. Review of Colchester Borough Homes: 2022-23 Performance, and discussion of Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2024-25 3. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 14 November 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 9 November 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [TBC] 2. Budget Strategy for 2024-25 3. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 12 December 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 6 December 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [TBC] 2. Half Year 2023-24 Performance Report 3. Strategic Plan Action Plan progress 4. Local Council Tax Support – Year 2024/25 5. Work Programme 2023-24

Scrutiny Panel meeting - 23 January 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 18 January 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Resources, if possible] 2. Budget Strategy for 2023-24 3. 2024-25 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, Medium Term Financial Forecast and Treasury Management Investment Strategy 4. Housing Revenue Accounts Estimate and Housing Investment Programme 5. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel - 13 February 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 8 February 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [TBC] 2. Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2024-25. 3. Arts Organisations receiving Council funding 4. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel meeting– 12 March 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 7 March 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [TBC] 2. Town Deal projects progress report 3. Scrutiny Panel Annual Report 4. Work Programme 2023-24

Items still to schedule, when possible:

- Previous Council negotiations with Alumno [Monitoring Officer advice is that this will only be able to be scrutinised in open session once the current ongoing legal situation is resolved regarding the Queen Street site]
- Planning trial of local prioritisation for property purchasing [relating to a recent planning application] [Officer advice is that this is at an early stage and is likely to need to wait until it is ready for meaningful scrutiny of scheme and outcomes, expected at some point in 2023-24]

COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS 1 July 2023 – 31 October 2023

During the period from 1 July 2023 – 31 October 2023* Colchester City Council intends to take 'Key Decisions' on the issues set out in the following pages. Key Decisions relate to those executive decisions which are likely to either:

- result in the Council spending or saving money in excess of £500,000; or
- have a significant impact on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards within the City of Colchester.

This Forward Plan should be seen as an outline of the proposed decisions and it will be updated on a monthly basis. Any questions on specific issues included on the Plan should be addressed to the contact name specified in the Plan. General queries about the Plan itself should be made to Democratic Services (01206) 507832 or email democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk

The Council invites members of the public to attend any of the meetings at which these decisions will be discussed and the documents listed on the Plan and any other documents relevant to each decision which may be submitted to the decision taker can be viewed free of charge although there will be a postage and photocopying charge for any copies made. *All decisions will be available for inspection on the Council's website, www.colchester.gov.uk*

If you wish to request details of documents regarding the 'Key Decisions' outlined in this Plan please contact the individual officer identified.

If you wish to make comments or representations regarding the 'Key Decisions' outlined in this Plan please submit them, in writing, to the Contact Officer highlighted two working days before the date of the decision (as indicated in the brackets in the date of decision column). This will enable your views to be considered by the decision taker. Details of the decision makers are correct at the time of publication.

Contact details for the Council's various service departments are incorporated at the end of this plan.

If you need help with reading or understanding this document please telephone (01206) 282222 or textphone users dial 18001 followed by the full number that you wish to call and we will try to provide a reading service, translation or other formats you may need.

*The Forward Plan also shows decisions which fall before the period covered by the Plan but which have not been taken at the time of the publication of the Plan.

KEY DECISION REQUIRED	DOES DECISION INCLUDE EXEMPT INFORMATION (or information defined by the Government as Confidential)	DATE OF DECISION or PERIOD DECISION TO BE TAKEN	DECISION MAKER (title and name, including Cabinet, portfolio holders and officers) – details of decision makers correct at time of publication	DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED OR TO BE SUBMITTED TO DECISION TAKER TO CONSIDER (and from where they are available)	CONTACT DETAILS FROM WHICH DOCUMENTS CAN BE OBTAINED (name of the authors of the reports)
Approval to complete the purchase of land/property at 'The Centre' Greenstead from Notting Hill Genesis, using funding received via the Estates Regeneration Fund	No	June 2023	Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Mark Cory Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Daniel Barton Greenstead and Youth (Town Deal) Projects Manager Daniel.Barton@colchester.gov.uk 01206 282912
Review of Ferry Marsh, part of Colne Local Nature Reserve	No	June 2023	Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Waste, Councillor Martin Goss Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Rosa Tanfield Group Manager, Neighbourhood Services Rosa.tanfield@colchester.gov.uk 07976 794597

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Award of recycling materials contract	No	June 2023	Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Waste, Councillor Martin Goss Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Robert Doran Fleet and Depot Contract Manager Robert.doran@colchester.gov.uk (01206) 282612
Proposed Key Performance Target Indicators 2023-24	No	7 June 2023	Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet report	Cezara Cosma Programme and Performance Manager Cezara.cosma@colchester.gov.uk (01206) 508404

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Household Garden Waste Collection Service	No	7 June 2023	Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk		Rosa Tanfield Group Manager, Neighbourhood Services Rosa.tanfield@colchester.gov.uk 07976 794597
Acquisition of Seven New Build Homes from a Developer as Part of the Council's New Housebuilding Programme	Yes	7 June 2023	Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet report	Terri Hamilton Client for Affordable Housebuilding Terri.hamilton@colchester.gov.uk 03300 538007

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Business Improvement District Renewal Ballot	No	7 June 2023	<p>Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers)</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Cabinet report	<p>Andrew Weavers Strategic Governance Manager Andrew.weavers@colchester.gov.uk 01206 282213</p>
Award of Contract for Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's)	No	July 2023	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>

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Commercial Reform of the Northern Gateway Heat Network	Yes	12 July 2023	<p>Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers)</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Cabinet report	<p>Andrew Tyrrell Client and Business Manager Andrew.tyrrell@colchester.gov.uk 01206 282390</p>
Capital Budget Changes due to new capital projects for 2023-24 being added	No	12 July 2023	<p>Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers)</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Cabinet Capital Programme 2023-24 Budget Amendment report	<p>Andrew Small Section 151 Officer Andrew.small@colchester.gov.uk</p>

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Award of 3 x Contracts for the delivery of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2 energy improvement project	No	July 2023	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488
Award of Contract for Heating Installations to combat fuel poverty	No	July 2023	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488

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Award of Contract for the communal area cleaning of 2 and 3 storey blocks	No	September 2023	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488

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