

Policy Panel Meeting

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

Wednesday, 01 March 2023 at 18:00

The Policy Panel provides legislative, improvement and policy advice to Cabinet and Portfolio Holders on issues that may affect executive functions. The Panel considers issues at the request of Cabinet and Portfolio Holders and must seek approval from Cabinet on whether and how issues proactively identified by the Panel are examined. The Panel also considers initiatives for review from members of the public.

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Policy Panel – Terms of Reference

- (1) To consider strategies, policies and legislative changes identified by Cabinet that may require review and improvement and to seek Cabinet's agreement as to whether and how they should be examined.
- (2) To review issues at the request of a Portfolio Holder and to make recommendations back to the Portfolio Holder for decision.

COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Policy Panel
Wednesday, 01 March 2023 at 18:00

The Policy Panel Members are:

Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell
Councillor Chris Pearson
Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor Phil Coleman
Councillor John Jowers
Councillor Jocelyn Law
Councillor Rhys Smithson

Chairman
Deputy Chairman

The Policy Panel Substitute Members are:

All members of the Council who are not members of the Panel.

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

Please note that Agenda items 1 to 5 are normally dealt with briefly.

1 Welcome and Announcements

The Chairman will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chairman will invite all Councillors and Officers participating in the meeting to introduce themselves.

2 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.

3 Substitutions

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

4 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.

5 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Councillors will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meetings held on 30 November 2022 and 11 January 2023 are correct records.

Policy Panel Minutes 30 November 2022

9 - 16

Policy Panel Minutes 11 January 2023

17 - 26

6 Have Your Say! (Hybrid Council meetings)

Members of the public may make representations to the meeting. This can be made either in person at the meeting or by joining the meeting remotely and addressing the Council via Zoom. Each representation may be no longer than three minutes. Members of the public wishing to address the Council remotely may register their wish to address the meeting by e-mailing democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk by 12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting date. In addition a written copy of the representation will need to be supplied for use in the event of unforeseen technical difficulties preventing participation at the meeting itself.



There is no requirement to pre register for those attending the meeting in person.

7 City Status Update

27 - 34

Britain's first City is now one of its newest, an accolade that can provide opportunities for all. Realising these opportunities won't happen in a single year or be limited to what the City Council does, it will be about how everyone works together to build on the strengths Colchester already has. It will be about Communities, businesses, the public and voluntary sector and especially our young people. It will be about our urban centres and our rural communities, our amazing heritage, culture and economy and the new and exciting modern city opportunities to come.

- 8 **Grounds maintenance transition** 35 - 40
- This report provides a summary on the activities undertaken since the meeting of the Policy Panel on the 12 January 2022, where recommendations were made to Cabinet to extend the current grounds maintenance contract and for officers to continue with plans for an inhouse delivery model.
- 9 **Support for Small Businesses in & around Colchester** 41 - 46
- At its meeting on 21 September 2022, Policy Panel asked to be briefed on how Colchester City Council supports local small/medium enterprises (SMEs) due to the number of residents they employ.
- 10 **Exclusion of the Public (not Scrutiny or Executive)**
- In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 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).

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

POLICY PANEL

30 November 2022

Attendees: Councillors Scott-Boutell [Chairman], Bentley, Jowers, Law and Pearson.

Substitutes: Councillor Smith for Councillor Coleman, Councillor Naylor for Councillor Smithson.

58. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

59. Have your say on the future of Colchester

Mr Chilvers attended and addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to highlight a number of concerns which he had wanted to raise at an earlier focus group meeting which had been cancelled. The Panel were asked whether the Council's leisure facilities had to be so concentrated at the Leisure World site, referencing fitness and sports options possible elsewhere in the area. Mr Chilvers then asked for a wider roll-out of wheelie bins, to areas which did not currently have them, citing changing demographics as an argument in favour of this. Regarding the night-time economy, Mr Chilvers recommended a review to gather information if the Council wished to encourage more city-centre residential properties. Problems within the city were given as including bad driving, traffic congestion, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour and the harm these problems did to the image of the city and to its businesses. Mr Chilvers advocated greater policing and enforcement to solve issues and encourage more people to live in the city centre. Moving on to GP services, Mr Chilvers posited that the Council needed to factor in the need for increases to GP provision for residents in the city centre, along with other professional services and street cleansing resources. Finally, Mr Chilvers cautioned that the use of online-only surveys might skew the data received unless the demography of the respondents was very similar to that of the city's residents in general.

A statement was read on behalf of Mrs Williams (who was unable to attend the meeting), pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). Mrs Williams raised concern about abandoned vehicles and asked if such vehicles could be removed more quickly, and broken up and recyclable parts recycled. Mrs Williams also urged the Council to collect household recycling materials in one single collection, rather than collecting different materials separately. Finally, Mrs Williams argued in favour of free parking options for shoppers, noting the cost of existing car parks in Colchester, compared to free parking in retail developments such as Lakeside.

Rosa Chandler, Group Manager – Neighbourhood Services, informed the Panel that

she would contact Mrs Williams to get details of the issues raised.

Rory Doyle, Strategic Director, described the period of consultation and focus group operation, including residents, people who worked in the area, firms and other local stakeholders. This meeting had been promoted for members of the public to address councillors directly and invitations were sent to members of the public who had wanted to attend other consultation groups but who had been unable to do so.

Tricia Smith and Libby Britcher, Research and Change Officers, explained the consultation with those who lived or worked in Colchester, giving information on the demographics of those involved and showing which Council wards were under- or over-represented within the responses. More women than men had responded, with a number of respondents declining to give a gender and some identifying as non-binary. There was strong representation from the age groups 25-34 and 64+.

Positives and negatives were raised about living and working in Colchester, but most respondents agreed that they enjoyed living or working here. The main priorities which had been raised were ranked according to how many people raised them, with 'safe, healthy, active communities' ranked highest, being mentioned by 60.4% of respondents. Second was 'a fair economy, so all benefit' being mentioned by 39.5% of respondents. Third was the priority of addressing the climate challenge, at 37.3%.

25% of responses gave the city centre as a priority, dealing with transformation, addressing of perceived decline and some mentions of safety issues.

Priorities for Council spending saw 85% of responses wanting environmental work to be prioritised and 35.9% supporting spending on the related work on parks and open spaces. The lowest priority given for spending was for corporate functions, mentioned by only 0.9% of responses. A general consensus was that people wanted the Council to maintain its oversight of services, even where these were contracted to the private sector. Concern was raised that corners would be cut without the presence of strong Council oversight of work done.

The Research and Change Officers described the wide variety of interlocking issues which had been raised. These included city centre regeneration, filling of retail units, mending of pavements and making best use of cultural and heritage assets to increase tourism. It was noted that 13% of respondents felt negatively about receiving city status and comments were received on perceived negative effects on the city centre, caused by local retail parks. Youth service provision, perceived lack of infrastructure and transport/travel problems had been raised and, whilst the overall support for environmental action was high, a number of pro-car comments had also been received.

Themes had been identified and the used to direct the discussion groups, with the approach being described. A key theme raised was the importance of a joined-up approach to improvements within communities across all wards, with a long-term focus on what is wanted for the future. People underlined the wish for Colchester to keep its own identity but to seek inspiration from good ideas from elsewhere too. The potential city centre changes were covered, with a potential for its use to shift from retail to residential and experiences [e.g., entertainments, social use, culture and food and drink provision].

Youth empowerment was discussed, which included engagement with pupils in local schools to explore what young people could do and to empower, rather than discourage from engagement. It was important to choose the right communication channels and to clarify whether young people in the area wanted more empowerment.

The relationship between city centre and retail parks was covered, with positives of both types of retail experience brought up by participants in discussion groups. Views were given that the city centre was more about experiences, whilst retail parks generally provided convenience. Issue, solutions and ideas were considered to improve use of the city centre and retail parks, with ways sought for retail parks to feed into and complement the city centre.

Regarding environment issues, this discussion group's participants all used the Council's garden waste service, but not many would pay for such a service. None of the participants had a wheelie bin, with opinions split roughly equally between those who did want one and those who did not. Keen interest was expressed in ways to expand recycling options.

The Panel discussed the methodology and evidence base for the consultation and information-gathering work. More information was requested about how the data was gathered and percentages of population/statistics given and how demographics of respondents related to the overall demographics of the Colchester populace. The Research and Change Officers explained that the population of the Borough (as was) at the last census had been around 192,000. Percentages of population (e.g., in regard to percentage of population who responded to the consultation) were calculated based on that figure.

A Panel member raised concern that the response rate was under 1%, with views being drawn from a small sample and a 'digital first' approach to engagement excluding some demographics from participation, where individuals often had limited access to the internet. The Research and Change Officers explained that officers had done what was possible within the budget set for the consultation. Non-digital options were possible if more money and officer time could be allocated to the project. Sampling based on demographics gave residents equal opportunities to take part, and options for residents to respond were outlined.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council, identified the online survey as a supplement to the wider consultation exercise with the public and councillors. It had not been possible to achieve a perfect sampling, but the sample had been a significant one. The Leader of the Council pledged to endeavour to make all councillors a part of the ongoing consultation work.

The Panel discussed the demographics of the respondents to the online survey, with concern at the problems caused by it being only online, but acknowledgment that the face-to-face consultation sessions mitigating these to an extent. A range of views were given by members, including on travel needs, wheelie bin provision, GP provision, parking options and use of heritage assets. Waste collection was discussed, with a view given that the different options should be considered, and that it should be shown to people why costly options were unaffordable. Improvements to

infrastructure would require significant planning and a wider focus than purely on housing numbers. A member urged the Panel to give residents another chance to give their views at its next meeting.

Concern was expressed by some members at their view that the survey was focussed on the City's centre and ignored rural areas. It was posited that the surveying of Colchester needed greater breakdown into different areas, with a Panel member urging greater use of data held by the Council to identify a range of people of which to ask questions. Local centres included the city centre, Stanway and Northern Gateway. A Panel member argued that a long term view should be being taken and that a wider consultation should be carried out, including rural residents and questions on issues affecting the different parts of the Council's area. The Research and Change Officers explained that consultation had been carried out with parish and town councils. The Strategic Director gave assurance that the consultation work had not been intended to be city-centric and that he would raise this concern with the Communications Team. A residents panel was to be set up for ongoing engagement and demographics would need to be monitored to improve the representativeness of those involved. A Panel member suggested dropping use of the phrase 'Just Colchester', in order to make this project more inclusive.

A Panel member noted that survey response rates were lower for Council wards which were further from the city centre. Concern was expressed about the lack of input from those under the age of 18 and that more needed to be done to gain responses from age demographics where response rates were low. Another member of the Panel agreed with the need for inclusivity, but stressed the financial pressures which placed limits on what could be done. There could be scope for youth representation from school councils, potentially engaging with resident panels.

A Panel member expressed the importance of protecting open spaces, dealing with parking, traffic and road issues, and the need to educate people in alternatives to car use. Community facilities were put forward as helping new residents to bed in to communities and engage with them.

Answering questions, the Research and Change Officers explained that more information could be given on the comments made regarding lack of infrastructure, but that these could not be used to give statistics or percentages. Having been asked how scoping and selection for the resident panel had been conducted, the Officers informed the Panel that they had engaged with existing groups, cognisant of the danger of producing an echo chamber. Work would be conducted to bring in representatives of those groups underrepresented. The aim was to target those most affected by issues in question and help would be needed to with outreach. Additional staffing resource would also be necessary. The Strategic Director emphasised that the officers who had conducted the surveying and consultation had designed the project within the parameters they had been set and suggested that the Panel seemed to wish to alter the parameters and widen and continue consultation. Panel members suggested use of community newsletters and other options.

Councillor Cox, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Heritage, agreed that the methodology employed was important that those planning the city status programme would take on the ideas raised. The next step was the year of celebration. Big events were planned, to draw tourists and focus on heritage across the area. Part of this

would involve community-generated ideas, and the Portfolio Holder named a selection of these. Legacy planning continued to be worked upon.

Addressing wishes to increase youth engagement, the Portfolio Holder told the Panel of the setting up of the 'Democracy in Schools' programme which could be part of this engagement.

The Leader of the Council reiterated the promise that the Council would listen to all views, and recognised the hard work of the officers who had carried out the consultative work programme. This had covered master-planning for the city centre, working with the County Council. Cabinet would continue to take on views and recommendations and the whole consultation included surveying, consultation sessions, councillors, committees and local stakeholders and partners. Over 11,000 survey responses had been received.

The Chairman asked if further invitations to take part could be sent to those who had yet to respond. The Strategic Director cautioned that this would be dependent on whether there was sufficient officer time and resources.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that Cabinet focus on the importance of obtaining views from young people [under 18], and residents who were digitally excluded.

RESOLVED that the Panel would review the final report on the consultation/survey at its next meeting, with an additional opportunity for public views to be given.

60. Colchester Landscape, Nature and Waterways Strategy development proposal

Councillor Kevin Bentley (by reason of being Leader of Essex County Council) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Rosa Tanfield, Group Manager – Neighbourhood Services, laid out the proposals in the report, for the Policy Panel to work on putting together the Strategy. The Panel were given the background to the existing and legacy policies and strategies covering the range of matters which would be included. It was proposed that the Panel set direction for the strategy which would include open spaces, natural assets, waterways and coastline, using a series of workshops to produce ideas to bring to a future meeting of the Panel for formal consideration and recommendations to be considered for making to Cabinet. A pilot project had already been undertaken with the University of Essex on participatory strategic development.

Approval was given by one Panel member for the plans to include coastline within a strategy like this for the first time by the Council. Examples were given of the coastline and waterway issues which would need to be considered, including environmental concerns and recreational use of them as assets.

The Panel discussed the format of the workshops and were told by the Group Manager that the proposal was for all Panel members to participate, supported by herself and relevant officers, as well as the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability. The workshops would work on how to put the strategy together,

examine the pilot project with the University, examine the data and use them to develop key themes. The Group manager agreed that each geographic areas would need its own tailored approach.

The Group Manager was asked if the workshops have published agendas which could be circulated to all elected members and whether all elected members would be allowed to take part. The Group Manager agreed that options to maximise involvement, including by stakeholders and partners, could be discussed with the Portfolio Holder, and noted that reports on the workshops would be brought back to the Panel's future meetings, which would be recorded.

Panel members expressed support for the suggestion of making the working group open to all councillors, making use of their knowledge and skills, however one member did caution that whilst engagement would be important, it could be hard to focus when meetings included more and more people. Rory Doyle, Strategic Director, underlined this concern, noting that unwieldy large workshops would be difficult to manage and, whilst views should be collected from as wide a pool as possible, a core group was needed to move the Strategy forward. There would be other ways for others to contribute views and ideas to the Strategy.

A further suggestion was made that the City Council should appoint a champion to lead on matters of landscape management, conservation and use, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder and wider Council as a part of addressing climate change.

The Panel discussed the looking at linkages between different green spaces and how they should be developed in the strategy, helping to ensure biodiversity and wildlife migration.

The Panel considered whether it would be possible to hold joint meetings with the Environment and Sustainability Panel.

It was noted that the report did not include a register of the City Council's land and coastal assets, and a Panel member expressed the need to know what the Council owned directly, and the areas in which it could exert influence on others, requesting an asset register.

A Panel member suggested that an addition should be made to the list of considerations at 5.5 of the report, to say that the Strategy would need to be in line with the Council's priorities, as defined by Cabinet. A further member posited that Cabinet would need to liaise with the Planning Team over the strategy on issues such as access.

The Group Manager explained that the workshops would be informal meetings between Policy Panel and officers, describing how the pilot scheme for participatory governance around the River Colne had worked, examining risk, challenges, opportunities and funding matters. Details would be brought to the workshops and the Panel's steer would be sought on the work proceeding, and development of the Strategy. This was expected to be an eighteen-month programme.

The Chairman urged officers to make sure that they informed the Environment and Sustainability Panel of what each of the workshop sessions would be discussing.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council, welcomed the views given and gave his commitment to using councillors' abilities and knowledge, praising the positives that these brought to the Council.

61. Work Programme 2022-23

Owen Howell, Democratic Service Officer, provided an update on matters relating to the Government's bringing in of requirements for voters to show photographic ID when voting. The secondary legislation needed for this to come into effect for May 2023 was now proceeding through Parliament. The Council's Monitoring Officer was of the view that it would not be possible to prepare a meaningful report for the Panel's January meeting, and that the meeting on March 1 would give the time needed for the legislation to come into force. The Panel discussed how they thought this subject should be handled and came to the view that an all-member briefing from the Monitoring Officer in February would be the best way to examine the Council's implementation plans to carry out its new responsibilities, and to inform councillors of the new requirements on voters.

RECOMMENDED to the PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR RESOURCES that the Monitoring Officer hold an all-member briefing in February 2023 to cover the new requirements for voters to show photographic ID, and the Council's actions to meet its new duties relating to this.

RESOLVED that: -

- 1) An item be added to the agenda for 11 January 2023 to further discuss the emerging Strategic Plan
- 2) Future meetings of the Policy Panel receive update reports on the work done by Panel members in the workshops relating to the Landscape, Nature and Waterways Strategy.

POLICY PANEL

11 January 2023

Attendees: Councillors Scott-Boutell [Chairman], Bentley, Coleman, Jowers, Law and Pearson.

Substitutes: Councillor Tate for Councillor Smithson.

Also in attendance: Councillor Fox, Councillor Cory

62. Minutes of Previous Meeting

It was confirmed that the minutes from the meeting held on 30 November 2022 had now been produced, circulated for officer comments and would be ready for the Panel to consider at its next meeting. The production of these minutes had been delayed due to heavy calls on officer resources during December 2022.

63. City Status - verbal

Councillor Kevin Bentley (by reason of his wife being a ‘Colchester Ambassador’) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

A statement was read by the Chairman on behalf of Mr Dorian Kelly (who was unable to attend the meeting), pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). Mr Kelly described the gaining of city status as a chance to showcase Colchester, making it vital that the launch was comprehensive, memorable and enough to spark national interest. Social media, press work and promotion would be needed, which in his view merited the appointing of an artistic director to manage the project. Colchester had a significant presence of the arts, better than the rest of the region, but caution was given that other areas were providing better support to the arts in their parts of the region. Mr Kelly argued that most activity across Colchester had been by members of the public or private sector organisations, including large numbers of festivals and events. Mr Kelly complained that no providers of artistic or cultural attractions or events had been informed or consulted over the city status launch or programme, and urged that the programme of events and publicity must be coordinated and marketed properly.

Rory Doyle, Strategic Director, explained that a more-detailed item on this subject would come before the Policy Panel in March. The work being conducted was in two main strands; launching of city status and legacy building for the long term. Lindsay Barker, Deputy Chief Executive, was leading on city status and legacy work. Lucie Breadman, Strategic Director, was leading on the ‘Year of Celebration.’ The calendar was developing, with key events in the 2023 visitor guide already.

The Council was working with businesses to develop and hold celebratory events

and was engaging with partners and showcasing events, such as the Siege re-enactment and gladiatorial exhibition at the Castle until July 2024. The marketing campaign was being led by the Business Improvement District [BID], supported by the Council, and will include attractions in Colchester's rural areas. The suite of marketing tools and materials for partners would be launched on 16 January. Visit Colchester were showcasing events for the 'Year of Celebration.'

The Council had launched its creative events fund and was seeking applications to deliver high-quality creative experiences, showcasing local heritage and promoting the area's diverse communities. The Cultural Education Partnership, led by Steve Mannix, was planning events and activities across various sites of cultural significance.

The Strategic Director explained the planned legacy work, to be produced collaboratively. Prior to Christmas, Council management and the Leader of the Council had worked with partnership boards to use existing partnerships and assets to promote legacy work. Colchester's 'Ambassadors' had been keen to support the city status work. Ambassadors were people from local businesses, offering a broad range of skills. Marketing and branding of the legacy programme was supported by the BID and Our Colchester, with the scope likely to broaden over time. A full programme of engagement with businesses and residents would be conducted over the coming months, to develop key themes and the meaning of city status to people. More detail would come to Policy Panel in March.

Sir Bob Russell attended and, with permission of the Chairman, addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). Sir Bob noted that no reference had been made as to whether a permanent structure would be erected to mark city status. No structure had been put in place for the Jubilee, so it was even more important to produce one for city status. Sir Bob also cautioned that the Siege of Colchester was not something to celebrate, but something to commemorate separately, due to the death and destruction which occurred. Officers were asked if the Civic Society or resident groups had been asked their opinions about city status events.

The Panel discussed the work of Colchester Ambassadors and the access they provided to different networks, some global.

Panel members agreed with the points made that the Siege of Colchester was something to commemorate, but was not an event that should be celebrated.

The siting of a permanent structure was discussed, with support voiced for this, especially given the extensive engineering history of Colchester, with an example being the Town Hall built from the profits of engineering businesses. A Panel member suggested funding should come from public subscription.

The Panel discussed linking coronation events with the city status events programme, in partnership with churches, resident groups, parish councils and other groups. One suggestion was to convene a panel of all Council committee chairs to oversee the city status programme work.

The Panel discussed the relationship between the part of Colchester historically

considered as the centre, with the developing centres such as Tollgate and Northern Gateway, as well as celebrations of the areas farming and fishing.

The Strategic Director pledged to feed back the views given and get these to the working group and Portfolio Holder, including the concerns about how to approach the Civil War re-enactment sensitively. There would be much engagement and consultation with residents and partner groups and organisations, including One Colchester and the garrison.

Councillor David King, Leader of the Council, explained that the 'Board of Boards' co-ordinating group had met that day and looked to market the city in a deeper way than previously, with more done and feedback provided to councillors. The legacy programme would be used to improve the economic prospects for the local area.

A Panel member underlined the Panel's need to receive a written report on this important subject and expressed concern that, given the Panel's wish to explore matters at an early stage, it would be very late to bring this report to Panel in March 2023. The Panel member urged that consideration be given to areas across Colchester, and all parts of the city's history.

A Panel member highlighted the thousands of young people who lived in the Colchester area and the need for them to be consulted as to the future of Colchester. Another Panel member noted the school engagement work led by Steve Mannix, Chief Executive of the Mercury Theatre, and agreed that there was a need to capture the enthusiasm and creativity of local young people.

The Panel asked whether the toolkit of resources would be made available to town and parish councils and community groups, including in new-build areas. Inclusion of all was emphasised, including in the branding and marketing.

The City's industrial and commercial heritage was discussed, with Panel members noting that the nearest museum displaying the heritage of Paxmans was in Stowmarket. Hollington Brothers had historically been based in the Colchester area and had supplied uniforms to the British Army. Marine engineering also had a long tradition in the local area and Panel members expressed a wish for the full breadth of Colchester's history to be celebrated or commemorated, as a way to shape an identity for Colchester, reflecting all parts of its history, good and bad. The Deputy Leader agreed with the points made and expressed his support for reflecting the local industrial heritage, including the placing of commemorative assets on the former Paxman site to mark its history. A Panel member suggested reviving the historical title of Port Reeve, to mark Colchester's former role as a working port and as a point of interest. The Strategic Director gave assurance that he would feed the Panel's views back to the relevant officers.

Officers were asked if new TV adverts were being considered to market Colchester to potential visitors. The Strategic Director explained that a number of promotional videos had already been developed, including for screening at cinemas. Further TV advertising could be explored as an option. The Strategic Director also addressed questions regarding train and hotel packages and committed to getting more details on these and ensure they were provided in the written report to come to the Panel at its March meeting.

The Policy Panel discussed whether to make formal recommendations to Cabinet that: -

- a) A clear timeline of events, celebrations and commemorations be produced and marketed;
- b) Investigations are carried out to mark contributions made by individuals, organisations and companies, such as by publicly-displayed plaques showing who funded structures or led events;

The Leader recapped the consultation and marketing work already carried out and ongoing, and highlighted the timetable of events which had already been drawn up. The year of celebration would showcase Colchester's legacy in the widest possible sense, based upon consultation responses. The Leader asked for the Panel's patience to allow the work to continue. The Board of Boards would meet again in a month's time to receive an update on progress and to lay out more marketing. A clearer picture would be possible by March, when the plans and timeline would be ready for full examination by the Panel.

The Panel agreed that no formal recommendations were necessary at this time, and a Panel member suggested that the Panel should note and welcome the Leader's comments and welcome the full publication and circulation of a timeline. The Strategic Director highlighted the timeline which had already been published in 'Visit Colchester 2023' and explained that Councillor Pam Cox, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Heritage, would advertise this to all councillors.

RESOLVED that the Policy Panel notes and welcomes the actions promised by the Leader, regarding the planning and marketing of celebrations and commemorations to mark the awarding of city status to Colchester.

64. Emerging Strategic Plan and consultation

Rory Doyle, Strategic Director, summarised the Panel's work on this subject at its previous meeting. The Panel had been keen to receive more demographic data from the consultation exercises and had recommended that Cabinet focus more on gaining views from young people, which had not been captured by the consultations. The Strategic Director explained why the final report on the consultation had not been able to be included in the agenda for this meeting, as it had only been completed in the afternoon of the previous day [10 January 2023]. The report was a sizeable one, containing much content, and would be shared with councillors and the public to have an opportunity to feed into ongoing consultations. There was content in the report on the Council's communications work and on how residents felt they were being communicated with.

Libby Britcher, Research and Change Officer, confirmed that all of the headline points from the previous report on this subject still stood, with new points being added, including the need for better communication. This included the giving of explanations as to the areas of work for which the City Council was responsible (rather than those within the remit of the County Council, such as roads). Work was identified to ensure staff could signpost residents to the correct routes for dealing

with problems, and to ensure that the best methods/platforms of communication were chosen for each type of message. Full cycles of communication were necessary, with start, middle, and end, including feedback to be provided to those who took part. The importance of appropriate weighting of inputs was noted. Two new priorities had been identified; the City centre and infrastructure (including roads) and how this had not kept pace with the development of Colchester.

The Research and Change Officer agreed with the importance stressed on youth consultations. Further resources had not been available for further consultation within the framework of the current exercise, but officers had analysed the data as far as possible, such as to compare rural response with urban responses. It was found that there was little to no difference in response rates.

Many residents mentioned a wish for areas to be cleaned, and outdated elements replaced or improved. A unique identity for Colchester was called for, whilst examining successful cities to generate ideas. Concerns had been raised that residents needed to be heard more, both individually and in groups, with some residents voicing concern that there was no point in engaging with Council consultations.

Panel members noted the lack of a written report for this item and stressed the importance of providing committees and panels with written reports on agenda items, as this allowed members to consider information prior to meetings. A timeline was requested to cover the ongoing work. Officers were asked how Stanway residents could be included within the City as a whole, considering how many considered that they were residents of Stanway, rather than of Colchester. A Panel member stressed the importance of full cycles of communication and showing that the Council listens and was responsive, even where it could not fulfil all wishes. It was agreed that road complaints were a major issue and needed to be forwarded to the County Council, as the responsible authority in most cases. The Panel discussed views on devolving road maintenance to Colchester City Council, with views in favour of devolution expressed, but one Panel member arguing that any such devolution would need to be at a higher level than just a single borough or district council level. It was noted that the Council was often blamed for problems over which it had no control, and that it was a difficult task to educate people as to which organisations had different issues within their remit, and as to how the income from Council Tax was split between different public-sector organisations.

The Panel discussed previous methods used to invite residents to give their views and ideas without large expense being necessary. A Panel member argued that most people were less interested in wider strategic matters, and were more concerned with getting services which worked well. The work and customer-facing presence of the Highways Rangers Team was praised, and a Panel member argued the importance of the Council being seen as a 'human' organisation. The Research and Change Officer gave assurance that, once the priorities were laid out, officers would report back to residents on the outcomes from the consultations and show what the Council would do.

A Panel member noted that a Strategic Plan could be put in place by an administration, only for a new administration to be appointed, after elections, with a Leader who did not support it. The member argued in favour of all-up elections once

every four years, to tie in better with the setting of strategic plans. The Deputy Leader made reference to the current all-party working group set up to examine the electoral cycle and noted that the previous [current] Strategic Plan had received cross-party support. The Deputy Leader gave the view that a four-year strategic plan could be successful with the current electoral system of elections in thirds, with a benefit of this system being that councillors and parties tended to maintain communications with residents throughout each year.

The Leader confirmed that the Strategic Plan was being drafted to reflect the views shown by councillors, as well as priorities of residents. Members' views were needed and the Administration would follow the recommendation from the Local Government Association [LGA] to link widespread aspirations to future actions, and to build consensus, which was highlighted as a strength of the Council by the LGA. Adjustments could be made to the Plan each year, after consultations, and the new Plan followed on from the spirit of the current Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Director summarised that the consultation report was working to feed into the Strategic Plan process. Cabinet wanted Policy Panel to have the opportunity to hear public views and make recommendations to Cabinet. The final report wasn't ready for this meeting, but it was hoped that it could be circulated to Panel members to get their views and feed these into Cabinet's deliberations when it considered the draft Strategic Plan. The Chairman agreed that the Panel could discuss its members' views further and that she could present these to Cabinet.

65. Member Champions

Rory Doyle, Strategic Director, gave the background to this item. The Leader of the Council was keen for the Panel to consider the idea and to give its views as to the merit of having Champions, and suggestions as to areas for them to cover. A common approach was given as being to focus champions on significant areas of councils' business, or where key groups felt that they were not sufficiently or appropriately being heard or engaged with. It was important not to duplicate the work of portfolio holders and to consider how champions would fit in with the work of the Policy Panel.

The Panel discussed the subject, including concerns that champions should avoid being 'cheerleaders' for portfolio holders, must be non-partisan and have a set-out way to report back to councillors. The Panel considered areas for champions, such as for physical health, leisure, retail, and open spaces. It was asked how councillors could volunteer for champion positions. Panel members considered concerns as to the call on the time of Portfolio Holders and officers which may come from operating member champions.

A Panel member suggested that there should be a champion for the garrison/armed forces. Councillor King, Leader of the Council, clarified that he was the current Armed Forces Champion, and agreed that this showed the limitations as to how widely known that championship was.

The Panel considered a member's suggestion that there should be champions for rural and coastal issues, as well as one for transportation and travel who could direct work at long-term plans for the future, including road infrastructure and usage.

Champions could show leadership and be 'friendly critics', and improve links to other organisations. A Panel member asked to see evidence as to how the roles would work, suggesting the piloting of a champion role, to be evaluated as to how it had worked. Questions were asked as to how the value of champions could be reviewed, as to what they add. Members underlined the need for champions to utilise councillors' expertise and knowledge, and that councillors should be asked to give the areas in which they had expertise and knowledge. The Leader agreed that this was a good idea and committed to opening champion positions up to all parties.

The Chairman outlined a previous champions scheme which had been operated at Colchester Borough Council. This had fallen away, due to not receiving significant support or engagement, and it was suggested that there needed to be good communication with officers, and for Cabinet to direct meaningful matters to champions when appropriate.

The Deputy Leader cautioned against setting an exhaustive list of Championships and agreed with the suggestion of trialling a couple of roles, followed by a review of their operation, and effort made to minimise additional workload on officers. Following this conversation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, the Policy Panel decided not to make formal recommendations, but members of the Panel suggested the following as potential areas for which Champions could be looked at: Physical health, retail, open spaces and leisure, rural and coastal issues, travel and transport, young people, older people, climate change.

RESOLVED that the Policy Panel had debated the merits of creating Champion roles to support the business of the City Council.

66. Climate Change Policy

Ben Plummer, Climate Emergency Officer, gave a presentation on the key points relating to the Climate Change Emergency which had been declared by the Council, including actions taken and the embedding of this within the culture of the Council, including the draft Strategic Plan, Climate Emergency Action Plan and in work with partners. All committee reports now had a standard 'Environmental Implications' section and environmental assessments were carried out in the initiation stage of all projects.

Low-carbon offices at Rowan House were being prepared for in-person use by staff, including the use of heat pumps. A sustainable travel plan was in place for staff, including greater use of online working and reductions in waste. Environmental training had been rolled out for all staff. SPDs [supplementary planning documents] were being written on a range of environmental and sustainability topics. An Energy Manager was being recruited to help reduce bills and emissions.

Partnership working relationships, such as with Essex County Council, were described. The Climate Emergency Officer outlined the Active Travel Fund and the hosting of the Climate Action Anchor Institution's working group.

The Council's sustainability work included working to meet the Future Homes Standard 2025 and to entirely phase out use of glyphosate weed killers. The Amphora Energy Heat Network and solar park were described.

The Council continued to engage with community groups, and its approach to community engagement was outlined.

The Council's emissions data from 2021-22 were described, with an explanation of how emissions were measured and where they originated from. The main parts of the Council's carbon footprint came from gas, electricity and the Council's vehicle fleet. A 10.1% decrease in Council emissions had been recorded since its declaration of a Climate Change Emergency. Projections of Carbon Dioxide emissions to 2030 were given, having been produced in cooperation with the Carbon Trust, and including emissions from Colchester Borough Homes. The Panel were told of the surveying and work which was ongoing to achieve net zero Carbon emissions by 2030.

A request was made for the Climate Emergency Officer to circulate his presentation slides to all elected members.

Monitoring included by the Climate Change Working Group, the Environment and Sustainability Panel, and the County Council Project Board. The work of these bodies was explained. Climate Emergency UK [CEUK] conducted external reviews and provided advice. The Council's action plan was scored at 52% by CEUK, compared to the average score of 43%. A plan was being drawn up to implement actions based on recommendations from CEUK and scoring from CEUK on climate action was expected from February 2023 and would be published.

The Panel considered the report and presentation. A Panel member gave the view that climate change and sustainability were related but different subjects. When looking at vehicles for use by the Council, the Panel member argued that the Council should examine vehicles' complete footprint for production and use, and judge which were most sustainable and least damaging to the environment.

Approval was expressed for the 10.1% reduction in Carbon Dioxide emissions, but concern was also raised that the Council was only two-thirds of the way towards achieving its target of net zero emissions by 2030. A request was made for more environmental SPDs to be produced, and more details requested on environmental training for councillors, partnership working with the County Council, and on whether there were enforcement powers which the Council could use to control or restrict emissions and vehicles producing high levels of emissions. Panel members suggested that producing an overarching Climate Change Policy would underline the Council's commitment to reaching Carbon neutrality, and communicate to the public the importance of active travel and lowering emissions.

A Panel member suggested that a Member Champion could be appointed for the field of Climate Change, working with Portfolio Holders and officers to ensure decision making takes place with consideration duly given to the Council's emissions. The Panel considered whether the Council should commit to never taking decisions which would damage the environment.

Councillor Bentley, who was also Leader of Essex County Council, gave a brief description of the Active Travel Scheme and the funding involved, and argued that a Council transport champion would help to advertise the Scheme and increase

uptake. It was emphasised that the work being done was to educate, inform and persuade people, not to dictate to them regarding their travel options. It was noted that action against climate change was everyone's responsibility, but that many people did not know what they could do to help improve the situation and that the Council could act to persuade people to change their travel behaviour, to the extent that they could do so. Councillor Bentley argued that the UK must show leadership in tackling climate change, that the current generations might be the last which could act to reverse changes, and that the Council should have a policy to guide its efforts and clarify its targets and methods to achieve them.

The Panel discussed the current 'no idling' policy, with the Leader explaining that the Council was looking at how to inform, persuade and, if necessary, enforce the policy. Panel members urged caution when enforcing, and to seek effective ways to engage with and persuade people, working alongside the County Council.

A Panel member urged the Climate Emergency Officer to seek the latest survey data collected by colleagues at Essex County Council.

The Panel considered the potential benefits of having an efficient, reliable, low-cost public transport system, looking at examples such as 'Transport for London.'

The Climate Emergency Officer gave assurance that he had noted the views and suggestions given and his view that the Panel was indicating that it wished to see a simple overarching policy on addressing climate change. The implementation date for the new environmental SPDs was imminent and the Climate Emergency Officer explained that he would investigate what powers the Council held to control emissions. Regarding engagement with the public, there was a section covering resident engagement and surveying in the upcoming action plan. A County Council app was about to go live to help people seek ways to reduce their emissions and energy usage, leading to savings on energy bills.

Rosa Tanfield, Group Manager (Neighbourhoods), summarised the conversation held regarding the ways the Council and individuals could change their behaviours, and highlighted the number of local groups which were working with an environmental focus, dealing with issues such as fuel poverty and active travel, and which the Council was supporting where possible.

The Deputy Leader posited that the Climate Emergency Declaration already laid out what was needed, and that actions being taken were widespread and ongoing, with a clear target of carbon neutrality by 2030. The Deputy Leader argued for officers to focus on work necessary to meet this target, rather than on policy development. Counter arguments were heard from some members of the Panel, including that the Climate Emergency Declaration was not a policy, that it was important to clarify what the target was (e.g. was it for carbon neutrality within the Council or for the whole area of Colchester) and that a simple policy would set a framework and codify targets. It was argued that the County Council's policy could be used as a template, allowing a policy to be quickly drafted. A Panel member suggested that the drafting of a policy might entail more work to set out something that was already embedded in the Council's culture. Rory Doyle, Strategic Director, noted that the Panel did not seem to have a consensus as to whether it wished to recommend that a formal overall policy be drafted.

The Leader praised the work done by officers to make progress, including to get two-thirds of the way to the target of 'zero carbon by 2030'. The Leader asked that the Panel acknowledged this work, and support the work of Cabinet and the Environment and Sustainability Panel, which would look at what gaps there might be in the Council's approach and how best these could be addressed.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that Cabinet work with the Environment and Sustainability Panel to identify if gaps remained in the Council's approach towards meeting its targets relating to fighting climate change and, where identified, to identify how best to address them.

67. Work Programme 2022-23

A reminder was requested as to the scope of the item which the Panel was due to consider regarding the Grounds Maintenance contract. Rosa Tanfield, Group Manager (Neighbourhoods), explained that the Panel had previously recommended to Cabinet that the current contract be extended for three years, with annual updates to be provided to the Panel over the course of those three years.

RESOLVED that the Panel notes and approves the work programme for 2022-23.

1 March 2023

Report of	Strategic Director	Author	Lucie Breadman
Title	City Status Update		
Wards affected	All ward/s affected		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Britain's first City is now one of its newest, an accolade that can provide opportunities for all. Realising these opportunities won't happen in a single year or be limited to what the City Council does, it will be about how everyone works together to build on the strengths Colchester already has. It will be about Communities, businesses, the public and voluntary sector and especially our young people. It will be about our urban centres and our rural communities, our amazing heritage, culture and economy and the new and exciting modern city opportunities to come.
- 1.2 City Status didn't come with a pot of money, special tax breaks, or a magic wand but it does come with potential, further regional, national and international recognition, a sense of pride, positivity, and opportunity. Realising the potential will be enhanced by a positive, bold, and collaborative approach that builds on the existing strengths of our partnerships and recent successes such as Towns Fund, Levelling Up Funding, enhanced Arts Council Funding, Safer Streets Funding along with awards such as Firstsite winning the Arts Fund Museum of the Year 2021 and the University of Essex's Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) programme which is number one in the UK under the flagship Innovate UK programme.
- 1.3 In place terms, city status enhances our competitive position, which is important. There's a need to compete with other places for talent/skills, new business creation, relocations, and investment. Colchester has an excellent track record on inward investment having secured an identifiable £333.8m between 2015-2021. This trend continues with the recent announcement of a further £19.6m from the Levelling Up Fund and £1.3m from the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 1.4 Our current approach breaks down into two distinct areas.
 - They say building a legacy should start with being joyful so our Year of Celebration is about celebrating and commemorating what we have, feeling proud and positive about how we can build on our strengths in a collaborative way.
 - Creating a Legacy from our City Status award is then the longer-term goal of working together to ensure future generations benefit from this gift and the things we do now enable more happiness, health, and shared prosperity in the future.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 To note the plans and approach already underway.
- 2.2 To make any recommendations to cabinet, as deemed necessary by the Panel.

3. Background Information

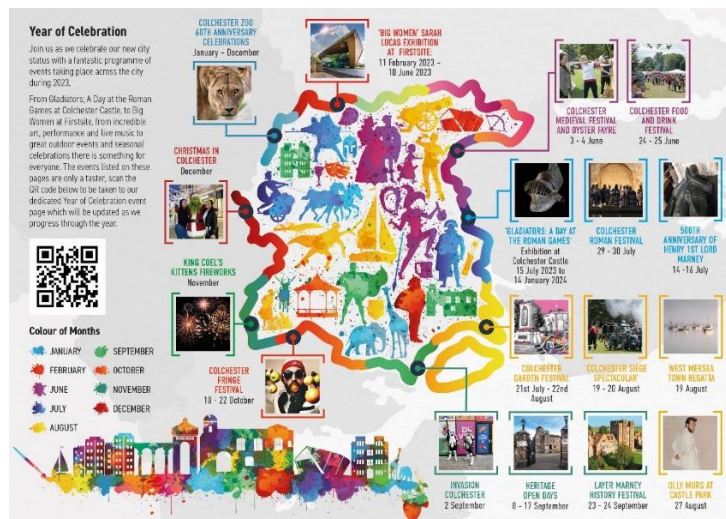
3.1 Year of Celebration

Colchester's Year of Celebration is a collaborative approach which aims to:

- Celebrate / Commemorate all the great things we have in Colchester.
- Celebrate the opportunity City Status brings.
- Support existing businesses.
- Attract new investment to Colchester.
- Attract more visitors to Colchester.
- Engage with young people and
- Promote Pride in Colchester.

What's happening.

- Throughout 2023 there is an exciting programme of events taking place across the city centre and surrounding towns and villages, enabling residents, visitors and businesses to come together to celebrate becoming a city once more. The full programme of events taking place are on the Visit Colchester website. Please check back regularly: visitcolchester.com/whats-on/year-of-celebration
- Key organisations and partnerships are coming together to form a collaborative approach to Marketing Colchester, an exciting opportunity to join up skills, resources, and our marketing reach.
- The Business Improvement District and City Council have launched videos and a campaign to celebrate our city centre attractions and businesses.
- The Year of Celebration will be a chance to celebrate in our communities and thank our volunteers who give so much, a volunteer celebration event is being planned for June.
- We are a City of Sanctuary, and we hope to gain Compassionate City status in recognition of the fact that we have given refuge to so many throughout history, a tradition that continues today.
- The programme of events and activities will grow. Many businesses and community groups are sharing ideas from village celebrations through to Colchester City's very own musical composition from Roman River Music.
- Our talented Communications and Marketing team have developed a Toolkit of visual marketing aides so we can all get involved and help spread the word....



3.2 The Longer-Term Approach

Inclusive

A key theme emerging from the conversations to date is recognising that city status will mean different things to different communities. Key to any approach is that it is inclusive of Colchester's entire geography and sensitive to the needs and history and distinctiveness of different communities.

City Council Priorities

On 25th January Cabinet presented its draft Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026 ratified by Full Council on the 22nd February 2023. The introduction sets out:

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.

The priorities are as follows:

- 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

The priorities and the delivery plan recognise and incorporate the focus needed for realising the benefits of City Status and as such forms our organisational approach.

Delivering on the significant Town Deal and Levelling Up Fund investments will help Colchester's competitive position. It will be seen as an outward looking, proactive place fit for business and growing its own skills base. In this way its image and reputation and improved competitiveness will foster economic consolidation and future growth.

Build on existing partnerships to develop a shared 2040 Vision for Colchester.

Colchester has established some incredibly strong and dedicated partnerships, who already work together with the City Council and Essex County Council to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for residents, visitors, and businesses.

Leaders of these existing partnerships asked that we resist the temptation to develop a new City Status Board, they felt the necessary structure was already in place for the strategic direction and the true legacy benefits should be bound up in the aspirations and priorities of the existing partnerships, not duplicated or complicated by separate workstreams.

As such, a small co-ordination group has been set up bringing together our Business Improvement District, One Colchester, We are Colchester, The Health Alliance, Your Colchester our Cultural Partnership and the Colchester Ambassadors. This collaborative will continue to develop the Year of Celebration activities but importantly will also work across our existing System Leadership to build a cohesive and collaborative 2040 Vision for Colchester that unites the whole System, including Health, Local Government, Economy, Education and Voluntary and Community Sectors.

This builds on work already done to develop shared approaches such as:

- Colchester's Communities Can
- Colchester's Cultural Strategy
- Colchester's Economic Strategy

Marketing Collaborative

Led by the Business Improvement District (BID) The City Status Place Marketing Group consists of individuals representing statutory partners and organisations that are well placed to make a valuable contribution to the development and implementation of a place led strategy for Colchester following its official 'City Status' award.

Objectives

- Agree approach to promote Colchester as a City
- To drive a 'positive' approach to Colchester as a City through members acting as ambassadors for Colchester
- Respect the autonomy of Colchester companies, organisations, their brands, and objectives
- Take a high-level approach to set the broad direction of travel
- Work with feedback from residents and businesses around brand values/development

Outputs

To understand what is needed to:

- Develop a 'Colchester Place Marketing Pack' for partners across the City to adopt including:
 - adopt/include key messages across our collective work where possible and suggest ways to deliver the plan
 - identify needs gaps
 - develop an approach for a possible future place brand
 - develop a way to test this externally to Colchester (Savills, Patch, AIXR) and internally
 - encourage others to adopt it too
 - review and report back to City Group
 - agree key messages
- Develop a city-wide Commercial Inward Investment Plan for Colchester City

Focus on Young People

Working with key partners such as the University, Institute, ECC Youth Services, Local Cultural Educational Partnership, Mercury Theatre and Essex Book Festival we will ensure the voices of future generations are heard and included in the Vision and plans going forward.

Making the most of our multi-million-pound investments in digital infrastructure and skills development to encourage local young people to stay in Colchester, realise the opportunities it offers and invest their futures here is key.

A Manifesto for Essex Youth Panel is in development, kicked off by a summit in January. Improvements to Youth Facilities are underway, a new Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed with University of Essex and key partners and a new Local Cultural Education Partnership has been established with our Cultural organisations working together with local schools and youth providers to enhance and further develop the cultural offer for children and young people across the city. This will include a new Summer Programme of activities, improved access to work experience and access to professional development for teachers

and youth workers. The programme has additional support from Arts Council England for the next two years.

Celebrate our Volunteers

In June, as part of the Year of Celebration an event to recognise our incredible volunteering community is being planned, led by C360 and sponsored by One Colchester and the City Council. We hope to continue to build on the successes in coming years and ensure that this culture of kindness and mutual support remains at the heart of our future Vision.

Engagement

As said above City Status will mean different things for different communities and extensive consultation has been taken by a range of partners, including the City Council, most recently to inform the Strategic Priorities in 3.2.2 above.

We will work with partners to consider any gaps in engagement and continue to look for opportunities to talk and listen to help develop the 2040 Vision.

4. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 4.1 The award of City Status has no direct impact on equality, diversity and human rights, however the ambition that comes with it for a happier, healthier and more fair society does, and in a positive way.
- 4.2 Our Year of Celebration is about reflecting on the strengths we have and being proud of Colchester, the wide and diverse range of events and activities should help to showcase Colchester's inclusive approach and aims to bring people together to celebrate now and our future opportunities.
- 4.3 Much of the future approach is aimed at delivering on priorities which focus on improved health, wellbeing, equality and inclusive growth and prosperity as well as tackling the impacts of climate change and reducing inequalities.
- 4.4 This report and City Status is not introducing a new policy or any major changes to a policy and therefore an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been completed.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 To date a one-off budget amount has been set aside of £50,000 to support City Status.

6. Standard References

- 6.1 References to the Strategic Plan are set out in 3.2.2. There are no considerations / implications for consultation; publicity; finance; community safety; health and safety or risk outside any comments made in the body of the report.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Table of Events (being added to as events are confirmed)

Date	Event Name	Type	Venue
Feb	Big Women	Art	firstsite
Feb	Minorities Pottery Fair	Art	Minorities
Feb	London Mozart Players	Musical	Mercury
March	Bury Me In Colchester Mud	Theatre/Heritage	Arts Centre
March	They Don't Pay? We Won't Pay!	Theatre	Mercury
April	Around the World In 80 Days	Theatre	Mercury
May	Great Expectations	Theatre	Mercury
June	Medieval & Oyster Fayre	Heritage	Castle Park
June	Essex Summer Opera Festival	Musical / Festival	Layer Marnie
June	Colchester Food and Drink Festival	Festival	Castle Park
July	Gladiators - A Day At The Roman Games	Exhibition/Heritage	Castle Museum
July	Youth Take Over	Youth Arts Day	Mercury
July	Colchester Garden Festival	Festival	Various
July	Unbelievable	Theatre	Mercury
August	West Mersea Town Regatta	Regatta / Festival	Mersea Island
August	Colchester Siege Spectacular	Commemoration	City Centre & Park
August	Olly Murs	Musical	Castle Park
Sept	Invasion Colchester	Festival / Retail	City Centre
Sept	Heritage Open Days	Heritage	Various
Sept	Colchester Soapbox Rally	Kart Race/Family	High Street
Oct	Colchester Fringe Festival	Festival	Various sites

1 March 2023

Report of	Strategic Director	Author	Rosa Tanfield
Title	Grounds maintenance transition		☎ 0330 0538 047
Wards affected	'Not applicable'		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary on the activities undertaken since the meeting of the Policy Panel on the 12 January 2022, where recommendations were made to Cabinet to extend the current grounds maintenance contract and for officers to continue with plans for an inhouse delivery model.
- 1.2 Arrangements are in place to develop service improvements with the existing contractor.
- 1.3 A reorganisation of the inhouse team has prepared itself for the future and enabled further opportunities for job creation and focus on such things as commercial opportunities and active community engagement.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 For information only.

3. Reason for Review

- 3.1 To provide an update to the Policy Panel, as agreed by Cabinet on 9 March 2022, which resolved that:
 - a) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Environment to extend the contract with the existing contractor for three years in accordance with the existing terms.
 - b) the recommendations by the Policy Panel at its meeting on 12 January 2022 referred to in section 3 of the Assistant Directors report, be approved.
- 3.2 At its meeting of Policy Panel on 12 January 2022, the following recommendations were made:
 - a) the contract with the current contractor Idverde be extended on the same terms. There is provision within the current contract for an extension of three years [only] if the Council decides up to 72 months from the commencement date. The last date for extension notice is 1 April 2022.
 - b) Officers should continue with plans for an inhouse service, meeting the objectives agreed for commencement at the end of the contract extension
 - c) an annual update be provided to the Policy Panel on progress of plans towards bringing the grounds maintenance service inhouse, with

confidential sections to allow discussion of commercially sensitive matters where necessary.

- 3.3 Whilst the Council has a clear ambition for an inhouse model, the decision to extend the current contract does not preclude the option or ability for the Council to continue to develop the proposal during the extension period via a twin track approach, which could provide an opportunity for the planning and strategy to take place ahead of a transition. Making updates to the Policy Panel will ensure good and robust progress is made.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The grounds maintenance contract with Idverde has been extended through to 31 October 2026, as recommended by Policy Panel at its meeting on 12 January 2022 and agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 March 2022.
- 4.2 The officers and contractor have set out a commitment to develop service improvements. This includes such things as:
- Delivering a carbon neutral service.
 - Continuing to invest in new, cleaner, and more efficient fleet, be that electric or zero emission alternatives.
 - Investment in technology.
 - Using technology to improve communications through a service management system, which will be introduced more comprehensively within Colchester. It is designed to enhance supervision, digitise monitoring, and make communication and reporting more transparent.
 - Sustainability and biodiversity.
 - Support the delivery of Colchester's biodiversity strategy.
 - Increase community activities.
- 4.3 Beyond the discussions in relation to the contract extension, the programme of transition to an in-house model is still very early. Officers have been therefore considering the activities that can be undertaken now to prepare for the future. This has included a reorganisation of the Parks, Countryside and Greening team ('Greening team'), to create the foundation to develop a more comprehensive team in the future.
- 4.4 The core objectives of the team reorganisation were:
- Greater focus, ownership, and accountability for performance of the Service
 - Developing resilience and future proofing the service
 - Focus on Strategic Priorities
 - Sustainable services
 - Green, biodiverse Colchester
 - Safe, well, enabled residents and communities.
 - Supporting economic development
- 4.5 The Greening Team have set out a commitment to work with all teams, partners and colleagues across the Council to:
- support the growth of Colchester's identity as a green place.
 - lead on enabling access to blue (rivers, coast lines and lakes) and green (Country Parks and open space) places.
 - lead on ecological and biodiversity conservation.
 - drive commercial and income generation from our blue and green infrastructure.
- 4.6 The Greening team aims are:
- **For the environment** - assets will be well managed and sustainable
 - **For health and wellbeing** - infrastructure and assets support and encourage greater wellbeing and leisure access for all residents and visitors
 - **For investment** - unlock commercial opportunities
- 4.7 Supporting the Council's commitment to a greener Colchester, the Greening team is responsible for the onward development of a greener Colchester, unlocking the opportunity of our green assets, and embedding the principles of

biodiversity and supporting ecology throughout the organisation, standardising, managing, monitoring and planning across the Borough.

- 4.8 The reorganisation has now created focus and accountability on four main areas:

Grounds maintenance and Operations

This team are involved in the day-to-day operational management of the grounds maintenance contract and other key assets such as Castle Park, the allotments, beach huts, amongst others.

Projects and strategy

This team is involved in delivering improvement schemes (including S106 funded schemes), green infrastructure enhancements, landscape planning and development, playgrounds maintenance, and refurbishment, as well as the delivery of the Greening Colchester policy. A review of spend has also enabled the creation a new role, Maintenance Technician. This has produced some cost savings whilst also enabling greater responsiveness to key or urgent issues. The Maintenance Technician is responsible for undertaking general repairs and maintenance of a skilled and routine nature within all Council parks and open spaces, perfectly complimenting the new role created three years ago of Play Park Inspector, creating greater resilience to ensure continuity of service.

People – to lead, nurture and enable our communities to enjoy our environment

Whilst this team will be concerned about the running of the High Woods Visitor Centre, a new role has been created for a Senior Ranger focusing on ‘people’. The purpose of this role is to ensure that we are engaging and activating people in our green spaces, be that through outreach programmes, events, activities, school programmes, partnership working or developing our volunteer base.

Place – to manage, maintain and keep safe our sites and environment.

Combining the arboriculture work of the Council with the Countryside team, greater synergy has been created through the development of a Tree and Country Park Manager. A Tree team has been developed over the last 2 years, removing the need for extensive contracted works (apart from some specialist work) enabling the Council to create some cost savings, whilst improving responsiveness and flexibility to the management of its tree stock. The finalisation of this change now enables the Council to develop a commercial offer for its tree services which will be launched imminently.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 5.1 There is no impact on the promotion of equality or discrimination in relation to gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, and race/ethnicity, nor any breach of human rights.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The work being undertaken by the team actively works towards the [Strategic Plan 2020-23](#); in particular ‘tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability’, and ‘Creating safe, healthy and active communities.’

7. Consultation

7.1 No consultation is required at this time.

8. Publicity Considerations

8.1 No publicity is required at this time.

9. Financial implications

9.1 The changes set out have already been met through the existing base budget and future. Base budget predictions.

10. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 The Council must do all it reasonably can to promote positive health benefits to our residents whilst reducing, removing or minimising any unintended consequences to health that may arise from services or decisions. the introduction of the senior Ranger for people will enable us to have greater focus on this area of our work.

10.2 The introduction of greening officers enables us to have more. Officers within our green public open spaces, which we hope will help to improve and prevent crime and disorder and reduce the fear of crime in certain areas.

11. Health and Safety Implications

11.1 There will be no harm to the health and safety of the general public.

12. Risk Management Implications

12.1 There are no risk management implications.

13. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

13.1 As set out within the report due consideration is being given to sustainability and carbon implications; From the suggested improvements to the contract extension to the activities of officers of the Council. The aims of the team set out clear ambitions for the environment, ensuring that all of its assets are well maintained, managed and sustainable.

13.2 It is recognised how important green spaces, as well as coastlines and waterways are to both communities, biodiversity and the environment:

- Those living closer to greener space in urban areas have been found to experience lower rates of anxiety - [Imperial College London \(2019\)](#)
- Increasing access/proportion of green space in local areas can help develop more active lives, promote communication and socialising with others, as well as helping to capture carbon and improve air quality ([Public Health England, 2020](#))
- [Around 9 in 10 people surveyed by Natural England](#) in May 2020 agreed that natural spaces are good for mental health and wellbeing. More than 40% noticed that nature, wildlife, and visiting local green and natural spaces have been even more important to their wellbeing since the coronavirus restrictions began
- The NEF analysis that highlighted concerns about overcrowding found that around one in eight people (12.5%) don't believe that their local green space is of a high

enough standard to want to spend time in. People on lower incomes report greater dissatisfaction with the quality of their green space than those on higher incomes ([ONS](#), 2021)

1 March 2023

Report of	Mandy Jones	Author	Karen Turnbull
			 282915
Title	Support for Small Businesses in & around Colchester		
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 21 September 2022, Policy Panel asked to be briefed on how Colchester City Council supports local small/medium enterprises (SMEs) due to the number of residents they employ.
- 1.2 This report:
- establishes the policy context for economic development locally and in the wider area.
 - outlines the city's business demography and other key data which provides a profile of the local economy.
 - Sets out a detailed description of business support activities taking place directly and indirectly through a variety of effective partnerships.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 Policy Panel is requested to note the scope and nature of business support available to local SMEs and how that supports business and skills retention, skills development and economic diversity in the city and surrounding area.
- 2.2 The Panel is also advised that this activity is part of the [Council's Economic Strategy 2023-2025](#) and that more information, including local case studies, can be found in the Council's [Colchester Annual Economic Report 2021-2022](#).

3. Reason for Review

- 3.1 The Evidence Base, which underpins the new Economic Strategy, identifies five key issues facing the UK's businesses today and importantly, all five are taking place at the same time presenting an enormous set of challenges for business:

CLIMATE CHANGE – Climate change affects most business operations from energy and water consumption, waste generated, consumer demand, supply chain procurement requirements and availability of raw materials, among others. Research in 2019 by Deloitte revealed that there is an increasing pressure for businesses to act from a broad range of stakeholders.

GLOBAL PANDEMIC – The Covid-19 pandemic has affected businesses and the local economy in a range of ways. Three national lockdowns in addition to more cautious behaviour by the public has had a significant adverse effect on footfall and custom. Changed migration patterns during the pandemic have affected labour supply, particularly key roles such as HGV drivers, in the hospitality sector, and seasonal workers. Changes to working patterns, such as

an increase in home-working, presents businesses with both challenges and opportunities.

RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE - Russia's invasion of Ukraine is adding to existing issues within global supply chains resulting from the pandemic, and other factors. The war may accelerate the shift from global to regional sourcing. But given China's dominance in manufacturing especially, the shift will only happen gradually and will require Government support. If further sanctions are introduced in response to pressure to manage the use of Russian oil and gas, the UK economy would continue to grow but the pace of growth would be significantly slower.

BRITAIN'S EXIT FROM THE EU - Whilst other economies are seeing recovery from the pandemic in terms of exports, the UK is lagging. When the Economic Strategy's Evidence Base was prepared in Spring 2022, the Office of Budget Responsibility stated that world exports are recovering from Covid growing 8.2%, while the UK had fallen 14% in 3 months to January 2022. EU exit affected trade with the EU. It had also affected labour supply as many EU nationals are not now working in the UK. The OBR claimed then that UK productivity will be reduced by 4% over next 15 years.

BUSINESS TAXES – National Insurance and the Minimum Wage rose last year. There was a cap on Business Rates rises for hospitality businesses.

BUSINESS COSTS – UK businesses face double challenge of rising costs and lower sales due to the cost of living crisis and people spending less. Rising energy costs, record inflation levels, tax rises, changes in the UK labour market (weak labour supply and strong labour demand, combined with the cost of living crisis are contributing to pushing pay rates up) and supply chain costs are all rising - all at the same time.

3.2 Businesses are currently under unprecedented pressure so the need for business support has never been greater.

4. Background Information

4.1 Colchester's Business Demography

Company size by employee numbers	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Micro	6,100	5,975	5,990	5,920	6,090	6,525	6170	6865	6910	7035	7275	7365	7255
Small	1,015	995	1,025	1,050	1,080	1,130	1090	1120	1120	1145	1195	1160	1130
Medium-sized	240	245	240	250	235	225	240	245	250	250	250	245	240
Large	25	20	25	25	25	30	30	30	35	30	30	30	30

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Between 2010 and 2022 there has been a 17.3% increase in the number of businesses in Colchester. 84% of businesses in 2022 were Micro (0-9 employees), 13% were Small (10-49 employees) and only 3.1% were Medium or Large (Medium: 50-249 employees, Large: 250+ employees).

Considering the volatility in the economy, Colchester businesses appear to be remarkably resilient and stable, possibly due to the diverse nature of sectors they contribute to.

Feedback from The Colchester Business Opinion Survey Autumn 2022, indicated that, for many businesses, growth has been put on hold to manage risks to the business until a more settled political and economic outlook is established.

4.2 Council's Approach to Supporting SMEs

• Partnership Working

The Council is connected with a variety of business organisations including:

- The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) – a partnership of six north Essex Local Authorities: Tendring, Braintree, Maldon, Chelmsford, Uttlesford and Colchester
- The 'Our Colchester' Business Improvement District
- The Colchester Business Enterprise Agency (Colbea) which has hosted and supported businesses in Colchester for over 40 years
- The BEST Growth Hub – the business support arm of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- Let's Do Business Group – financial advice specialists
- Colchester Ambassadors' Group of key business people
- The Federation of Small Business
- Essex Chambers of Commerce
- A variety of specialist business/sector networking groups

The Council works closely with the Business Improvement District to support businesses in the City Centre. This includes participating in their Board, contributing to the development of strategies and plans, and working together to deliver projects.

During the pandemic, we supported businesses by distributing Government grants and providing specialist support.

The Council was particularly fast at distributing direct grants to businesses. In addition, the Council contributed to a pool created by The NEEB to procure a range of advice and training contracts to support businesses across North Essex. The table below gives an indication of the nature and take up of this range of support in Colchester in particular.

It is worth noting that take up and participation from Colchester businesses exceeds other North Essex Districts on every count. This may well be due to the longevity of business support in Colchester from Colbea and the higher number of businesses here.

<i>Business Support contract commissioned</i>	<i>Delivery Partner</i>	<i>Colchester business participation / outcomes Dec 2021-Dec 2022*</i>
Business Start Up/Pre-Start Support	Colbea	7 new businesses created 12 new jobs created 27 students reached
Digital e-commerce	Colbea	7 businesses safeguarded 51 delegates attended training courses
Digital Skills development	Tech Talent*	6 learners signed up
Import / Export – how to	Colbea	17 businesses supported 17 delegates attended training courses
Business Navigation (diagnostic sessions)	BEST Growth Hub	107 businesses supported. Mainly wanting advice on finance and funding, skills, and mentoring
Low Carbon	Colbea	13 businesses supported 13 attended training courses
Finance & Debt Management	Let's Do Business	31 businesses supported 27% share of North Essex businesses supported which had finance raising fund interventions

*This contract commenced in November

In addition, the Council has commissioned an additional business support programme from Colbea to help local businesses save and manage costs given the current raft of cost pressures resulting from inflation, supply chain, energy, wage, and commodity cost rises. This is based on a review of all business contract procurement and is a free 1:1 service for 25 local businesses.

When the Pandemic began to take an effect in March 2020, the Council moved quickly to directly support Colchester's businesses. There was a direct investment into:

- In partnership with the BID, supporting town centre retailers with two artworks at the junction of Short Wyre Street/Queen Street and also in Sir Isaac's Walk (installation due this Spring) and the installation of nine wooden Parklets along the High Street.
- Financing £30,000 of additional resource to enable Colbea to offer more hours of business support, advice, and guidance during 2020 as the Pandemic took hold.

• **Inward Investment and regeneration**

The Council has successfully applied for Government grants to support businesses directly and by improving the trading environment. These grants include:

- The Town's Fund - £19.2m
- The Levelling Up Fund - £19.66m
- The Shared Prosperity Fund - £1.3m

It has also applied for an allocation from the Rural England Prosperity Fund which would provide direct grants to rural businesses.

These grant-funded programmes are supporting businesses by creating new shared work-space for small tech firms, attracting footfall to the City Centre by improving the public realm, and raising the skills of local residents by supporting IT training.

• **Signposting**

As well as the Council and Colbea's direct support signposting to businesses, there is a highly effective referrals programme between the partners listed above depending on the specialism of the partners and the needs of the business.

A recent example of the Council's direct signposting for businesses can be seen on the official Council website where there has been a recent posting to help business leaders navigate through the cost of doing business crisis and also the official website for Colchester businesses. www.colchesterultraready.co.uk

• **Consultation & Engagement**

- *Meetings:* The Economic Development team meets with businesses individually, it networks among business groups, makes connections to foster fruitful relationships and liaises with them where there are projects which affect them
- *Annual Business Rates Consultation Meeting:* a statutory meeting with businesses to inform them of the Council's financial obligations around Business Rates. This meeting is also an opportunity to discuss the Annual Economic Report for the previous year and any other issues relevant to business
- *Annual Economic Report:* a digest of key statistics relevant to the Colchester economy alongside a series of case studies from local businesses which aims to share learning and insights

- *Business Opinion Surveys*: carried out annually to gauge opinion and inform the delivery of partnership work and the Economic Strategy.

5 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

5.2 There are no Equality, Diversity or Human Rights implications

6 Strategic Plan References

6.1 The programme of business support is driven by the Council's new Strategic Plan 2023-26 objectives:

- Growing our economy so that everyone benefits
- Respond to the climate emergency
- Delivering modern services for a modern city
- Improving health, well-being and happiness

7 Consultation

7.2 Consultation is the essence of business support. The actions outlined in 4.2 above demand constant consultation, engagement, and shared communication between partners to understand and gain insights into economic activity in and around Colchester and beyond.

8 Publicity Considerations

8.2 There are no publicity considerations.

9 Financial implications

9.2 There are no financial implications for the Council.

10 Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 There are no Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety implications.

11 Health and Safety Implications

11.2 There are no Health and Safety implications.

12 Risk Management Implications

12.2 There are no Risk Management implications.

13. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

13.1 There are no direct Environmental and Sustainability implications from this programme of business support

Background Papers

[Colchester Economic Strategy 2022-25](#)
[Colchester Annual Economic Report 2021/22](#)

