



Cabinet

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Report of **Chief Operating Officer**

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Title **Colchester Strategic Plan 2023-26 – A City fit For the Future**

Wards affected **All**

1 **Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report concerns the draft Strategic Plan 2023-26 (attached). The Strategic Plan sets the priorities for the City and the Council for the next three years. The current Strategic Plan was published in March 2020 and runs to March 2023.
- 1.2 The Strategic Plan is one of the core statutory elements of the Council's Policy framework, as set out in Article 4 of the Council's Constitution. It must therefore be adopted by full Council.
- 1.3 The Strategic Plan sets the framework for the Council's three-year Medium Term Financial Forecast also being considered by Cabinet at this meeting. The proposed plan recognises the significant transformation of Council services that will be required to respond to future challenges and to provide services for a city fit for the future.
- 1.4 This plan recognises that it in the future it even more important that the Council works with and enables other organisations to support delivery of key priorities for the city.
- 1.5 Since the last Strategic plan was developed Colchester was granted City Status and the proposed plan recognises the opportunities this provides.
- 1.6 The recent Local Government Peer Challenge emphasised the need for a strong link between priorities and capacity to deliver. As such, once this plan is adopted by the Council as part of the Council's Policy Framework, a delivery plan for 2023/2024 based on available capacity and resources will be developed for consideration by Cabinet in March 2023.

2 **Recommended Decisions**

- 2.1 To agree the Strategic Plan 2023-26 and recommend to full Council that it be adopted.

3 Reason for the Decision

- 3.1 To enable the Strategic Plan 2023-26 to be agreed and adopted.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The current Strategic Plan expires at the end of 2022-23 so a new plan is required to reflect future challenges and opportunities. This needs to be adopted by full Council as the absence of a relevant Strategic Plan would create a significant risk of the Council failing to identify and deliver on its core priorities.

5 Background

- 5.1 The Council's Strategic Plan describes the organisation's view of the main priorities for the city. It covers a three-year time span, although many of the issues it addresses are long-term in nature.
- 5.2 The Strategic Plan 2023-26 sets out five strategic themes:
- Develop modern services for a modern city
 - Respond to the climate emergency
 - Tackle health, well-being and happiness
 - Deliver homes for those most in need
 - Grow our city's economy so everyone benefits
 - Celebrate our city and our heritage and culture
- 5.3 Each strategic theme includes key priorities, which address the key issues facing the City area and each priority includes key goals against which success will be measured.
- 5.4 The plan provides a springboard to maximise the opportunities and benefits of Colchester being granted city status. In the future this will also be supplemented by a long-term vision for Colchester created with others across Colchester to ensure the benefits are fully harnessed.
- 5.5 This new plan is being considered at a time of significant uncertainty and challenge and recognises the need for services to be transformed for the future through a new strategic theme to develop modern services for a modern city. This will include responding to the recent Local Government Association peer challenge including reviews of the of the Colchester Council family of companies. The plan also recognises that the City Council needs to increasingly work with others and enable them to help deliver key priorities.
- 5.6 Although other members of the Colchester Council family of companies, that is Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited, and Colchester Borough Homes have individual business plans and strategic plans these will be aligned with this strategic plan as an overarching vision for the City.

6 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan 2023-26 will continue to support the importance of equality and diversity in all aspects of life in Colchester.
- 6.2 The Equality Act requires councils to have an equality objective, and the new Plan does that throughout its themes and priorities. An Equality Impact Assessment is attaches as appendix 3.

7 Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The themes and priorities of the Strategic Plan 2023-26 will be reflected in officer reports to councillors following its adoption by full Council.

8 Consultation

- 8.1 The key priorities identified in the plan arise from a range of information sources including various assessments available such as [Census data](#), [ONS data sources](#), [Essex Open Data](#), [Public Health Profiles](#), [indices of deprivation](#), [Colchester Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\) profile 2019](#) as well as on results of public consultation. Consultation to inform the proposed strategic plan has included a public survey run during Autumn 2022. This resulted in 1113 responses. This was supplemented by several resident focus groups. A report of the responses is shown at appendix 2.
- 8.2 The proposed plan responds to the broad themes identified in the consultation. The results of the consultation will also be used to inform the delivery plan that will be considered by Cabinet in March 2023.
- 8.4 Key themes from the consultation were:
- Most respondents agreed that they enjoy living/working in Colchester, but fewer respondents agreed that they felt a sense of community in the area of Colchester. 'Creating Safe, Healthy and Active Communities' was also the 1st or 2nd priority for 60% of respondents suggesting this is a valid area the plan should focus on.
 - Improving and regenerating the town centre was mentioned by respondents throughout the consultation also suggesting this is an area of focus for the strategic plan. When asked about Colchester becoming a city, the regeneration of the city centre received the highest number of comments at 22%. Next, was culture/heritage and tourism at 21%.
 - The desire to have pride in the place which they lived was mentioned throughout the survey, however currently this appears to be lacking for some, with residents emphasising the need for a strong future vision for the city.
 - Climate and environment were also important to many respondents although this needs to be balanced with some of the difficulties for some in utilising sustainable methods of transport

9 Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 The Strategic Plan is a key element of the Council's continued external engagement activity. The Council will continue to ensure promotion of strategic activity via new and existing communications channels including direct, in person, in the media, on social media platforms and on its website.
- 9.2 The Council will communicate at key milestones of strategic projects to promote a strong positive reputation for the City, with half-year updates on the website.

10 Financial implications

- 10.1 The Strategic Plan sets the framework for the Council's three-year Medium Term Financial Forecast. This is a period of significant financial challenge and

uncertainty, and the plan strikes a balance between ambition for the city with the reality of these financial circumstances.

- 10.2 The financial implications of delivering the Strategic Plan priorities will be incorporated into the annual budgeting process.

11 Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Health, wellbeing and community safety remains a key component in this Strategic Plan. This is clearly identified in the “Tackle Health, Wellbeing and Happiness” strategic aim, and the priority to “improve community safety”.

12 Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 There are no Health and Safety implications from the Strategic Plan.

13 Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 When the delivery plan to deliver the Strategic Plan 2023-26 is developed, risks will be identified and addressed.
- 13.2 The absence of a Strategic Plan, or the retention of a Strategic Plan that is no longer fit for purpose, would create risks for the Council failing to deliver on its core priorities and use of resources.
- 13.3 The introduction of a new strategic plan, one year early, is a direct response to some of the key risks in the Strategic Risk Register, such as potential impacts on spending power and partnership delivery, and it will ensure that the whole organisation is focused a clearly understood, single set of priorities.

14 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and has committed to being carbon neutral by 2030. This plan will continue to deliver against this commitment as a golden thread throughout the plan as well as through the specific theme to respond to the climate emergency.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The draft Strategic Plan 2023-26.

Appendix 2: Summary of consultation responses

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers