

Scrutiny Panel Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ
Tuesday, 16 July 2019 at 18:00**

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

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

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

Dates of the meetings are available here:

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

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

Have Your Say!

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Access

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Facilities

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Scrutiny Panel – Terms of Reference

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

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

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

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

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
Scrutiny Panel
Tuesday, 16 July 2019 at 18:00

The Scrutiny Panel Members are:

Councillor Beverly Davies
Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor Tina Bourne
Councillor Paul Dundas
Councillor Chris Hayter
Councillor Mike Hogg
Councillor Sam McCarthy
Councillor Lorcan Whitehead

Chairman
Deputy Chairman

The Scrutiny Panel Substitute Members are:

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

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

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

2 Substitutions

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

3 Urgent Items

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

4 Declarations of Interest

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

participating in any vote upon the item, or any other pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest.

- 5 **Minutes of Scrutiny Panel meeting 11 June 19** 7 - 16
- 6 **Have Your Say!**
The Chairman will invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition on any item included on the agenda or any other matter relating to the terms of reference of the meeting. Please indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.
- 7 **Decisions taken under special urgency provisions**
The Councillors will consider any decisions by the Cabinet or a Portfolio Holder which have been taken under Special Urgency provisions.
- 8 **Cabinet or Portfolio Holder Decisions called in for Review**
The Councillors will consider any Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decisions called in for review.
- 9 **Items requested by members of the Panel and other Members**
(a) To evaluate requests by members of the Panel for an item relevant to the Panel's functions to be considered.

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

Members of the panel may use agenda item 'a' (all other members will use agenda item 'b') as the appropriate route for referring a 'local government matter' in the context of the Councillor Call for Action to the panel. Please refer to the panel's terms of reference for further procedural arrangements.
- 10 **Treasury Management – Annual Report** 17 - 36
A report for the Scrutiny Panel to consider Treasury Management activities and decisions during the 2018/19 financial year.
- 11 **2020/21 Budget Strategy** 37 - 48
A report on the 2020/21 Budget Strategy, as considered by Cabinet on 10 July 2019 is provided for the Panel's consideration.
- 12 **Annual Scrutiny Report** 49 - 56
A report setting out the work of the Scrutiny Panel during 2018/19 and requesting that the Panel recommends the report to Council for approval on 17 July 2019.

- 13 **Bus Review: Further actions** 57 - 92
A report for the Scrutiny Panel to consider information provided to it following earlier review sessions.
- 14 **Work Programme 2019-20** 93 - 102
This report sets out the current Work Programme 2019-2020 for the Scrutiny Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.
- 15 **Exclusion of the Public (Scrutiny)**
In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

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

- 16 **Treasury Management Annual Report 2018-19**
Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of
Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972
(financial/business affairs of a particular person, including the
authority holding the information).
The Panel are invited to note Appendix A to the Treasury Management Report 2018-19.

SCRUTINY PANEL

11 June 2019

Present: - Councillor Davies (Chairman), Councillor Bentley, Councillor Bourne, Councillor Hayter, Councillor Hogg, Councillor McCarthy, Councillor Whitehead

Substitutions Councillor Willetts for Councillor Dundas

Also present:- Councillor Cory, Councillor King, Councillor Luxford Vaughan

208. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 19 March 2019 and 22 May 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Bentley (by reason of being Essex County Council Cabinet member for Infrastructure) and Councillor King (by reason of being a Director of North Essex Garden Communities Ltd) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).

209. North Essex Garden Communities Project

Mr Coode-Adams addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to raise concern at the risks that this project would represent for the public and local authorities, at the potential need for large-scale borrowing to fund it and about matters raised by the redacted Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) report on the project. Mr Coode-Adams recommended that the Panel request unredacted copies of this report. He expressed fears that there is and would be a lack of control over the project by elected members and that the development corporation would not be subject to oversight by local authorities and scrutiny by the public. Mr Coode-Adams encouraged elected members to insist upon receiving a full business plan and financial appraisals for the project.

Mr Sunnucks addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to request an explanation as to why no additional financial data had been provided, following his request made at the Panel meeting on 19 March 2019. He further requested confirmation that the money due from central government and the local authorities involved in the project been received for 2018/19 and detail as to who authorised the payment from Colchester Borough Council. He recommended a 50-year financial appraisal and model and called for evidence giving assurance that spending is economically efficient. Concern was raised that either infrastructure promises would not be met, or the scale of the project would need to reduce, based on similar projects attempted

elsewhere. Full release of financial information to councillors would be vital for proper scrutiny before decisions are made on the project.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan attended and with the consent of the Chairman addressed the Panel to express her concerns regarding accountability. A response was requested to questions she had previously raised directly with North Essex Garden Communities (NEGC) Ltd. Concern was voiced that spending was going ahead without a confirmed business plan in place and that the setting up of a locally-led development corporation (LLDC) would leave local authorities with no planning or financial control. Councillor Luxford-Vaughan requested a clear explanation of what powers councillors will have over this, what spending is involved and who makes decisions, as well as details of plans to potentially use compulsory purchase orders for land. She requested the unredacted 2016 PwC report, NEGC Ltd's current strategic risk register and plain-English, past and present financial reports. Councillor Luxford Vaughan also sought assurances regarding the information that Cabinet received before deciding upon a dedicated delivery structure and raised the statutory requirements for setting up an LLDC and local authority oversight.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan asked why Essex University appeared to garner greater consideration than other stakeholders which could be affected by the development of garden communities.

Councillor King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, Ian Vipond, Strategic Director for Policy and Place, and Richard Bayley, Group Manager of NEGC Ltd attended to present the report..

Councillor King described the work being done by the NEGC Ltd Board to ensure that infrastructure and community facilities are provided within the Project. He agreed with the importance of providing as much transparency as possible (excluding commercially-sensitive matters), informing the Panel that he wished to hold regular all-member briefings, to cover the work and financial information of the publicly-owned NEGC Ltd. Assurances had been sought and provided on the value-for-money of NEGC Ltd's spending, and the Section 151 Officers of each shareholding local authority have scrutinized the company's accounts.

Councillor King explained that long-term planning and evaluation of sustainability would be conducted over the coming year and would be informed by future input from the Planning Inspector considering the Local Plan.

Councillor King agreed to provide a report to all councillors following each meeting of the NEGC Ltd Board and explained that he planned to circulate weekly updates to councillors, covering NEGC issues and progress on the Local Plan.

Addressing accountability concerns, Ian Vipond highlighted that there is almost no councillor involvement and oversight of private developments once they are approved, in contrast to the oversight and leadership roles that the local authorities will have in relation to NEGC Ltd. Transparency is an integral part of the planning process, with all information and documents used within it to be made public. Mr Vipond offered to meet again with Councillor Luxford Vaughan to address her questions. He agreed that jargon should be avoided in documents for scrutiny by councillors and the public.

An 'in principle' decision has been made by Cabinet to consider different types of development vehicles and mechanisms, but a final decision was yet to be made regarding

the use of a delivery vehicle. Each local authority would need to approve the method for proceeding with this.

Richard Bayley agreed with the need for inclusivity regarding the work of NEGC Ltd. and expressed readiness to work with local authorities and councillors on communications and dialogue. All-member briefings had been used successfully as part of other development processes. Mr Bayley recommended that these be held prior to key decisions, to provide councillors with information and assurances. Efforts would be made to ensure briefings are written in an accessible fashion, and jargon minimised. Certain decisions would however need to remain confidential, especially where these involved third parties.

Richard Bayley discussed the risk inherent in any development venture and gave assurance that this would be assessed as part of the options appraisal within the decision-making process regarding development vehicles. This would comply with duties relating to risk assessment and expectations laid out within the Treasury's Green Book.

Addressing a concern raised by Mr Coode-Adams regarding the format of the 2018 NEGC Ltd AGM, Mr Bayley explained that this had been a specific procedural meeting for shareholders, but that it had been followed by a public meeting open to all.

In response to Mr Sunnucks' request that a 50-year financial appraisal be carried out, Richard Bayley gave assurance that this was already underway and would assess the venture's long-term viability. This would form part of the options appraisal and decision-making by the councils in the coming months. In reply to Mr Sunnucks' concerns stemming from specific previous projects, Mr Bayley clarified that they were not comparable as those had involved land already owned by the local authorities involved.

Mr Bayley gave clarification that an interim business plan was currently in use by NEGC Ltd as the company was not yet in a position to draft a five-year business plan. Finances went through the budget procedures of the shareholding local authorities. All funds due from authorities and central government had been received for 2018/19 and year-end finance data had been made available. The Panel was given assurance that NEGC Ltd would work with local authorities to ensure all councillors were provided with regular 'Plain English' briefings on the company's work and finances. Richard Bayley promised to provide a response to the questions from Councillor Luxford Vaughan which had yet to be addressed.

Richard Bayley informed the Panel that it would be possible for NEGC Ltd. to provide a 'Plain English' version of the interim business plan within the next month, alongside the documentation and data which could be provided to the Panel.

Public and stakeholder engagement was explained and included work carried out with the University, local businesses/employers, the Haven Gateway Partnership, Homes England, Stansted Airport and local port authorities. Future public engagement would be more interactive and would be run as a three-sequence process over 18 months after the local authorities had gone through the sustainability and options assessments.

Regarding the 2016 PwC report, Mr Bayley and Councillor King informed the Panel that advice would be sought as to whether councillors could be provided with an unredacted copy, and it would be done if possible. A Panel member posited that councillors were entitled to see full copies of such reports, even if this required them to sign confidentiality agreements. The Panel also requested that full financial reports should be sent to all councillors. Richard Bayley confirmed he would work to provide the financial data they

require but that each share-holding local authority would need to agree to the terms of what data is made available. A request was made by the Panel for updated financial modelling to be provided. Ian Vipond agreed to make this available and explained that it would be done as part of the viability assessments. There will be briefings held for councillors prior to this, covering a range of issues including the viability assessments.

Richard Bayley outlined the oversight and control arrangements over LLDCs. The three-level structure consists of local authority oversight and control, oversight by the development corporation board (independent and local authority-appointed directors) and lastly oversight within the development vehicle/s. Oversight of stewardship and legacy issues were explained and identified (e.g. affordable housing, community facilities, energy supply). This would give local authorities certain greater control over decision making. A member of the Panel requested that a full explanation of this structure, and the powers held by councillors, be circulated to all councillors prior to a decision being made as to whether this approach should be agreed to.

Richard Bayley informed the Panel that there were alternative options to the model he had described, and that these would be examined within the options appraisal process. This would be conducted later this year. Councillors would receive details on this in preparation for this. It was confirmed that the Scrutiny Panel would be able to scrutinise the options appraisal process, should it wish to. Panel members discussed the importance of ensuring Scrutiny Panel conducted regular effective scrutiny of the NEGC Project, and the need for training to be given to allow members to conduct this.

The Panel discussed spatial planning and infrastructure provision within the Project and its crucial nature. A member of the Panel highlighted the Essex County Council report which predicted that in 20 years' time there would be an infrastructure deficit of £553m within Colchester Borough. Richard Bayley agreed that provision of infrastructure and employment opportunities are a key part of the NEGC Project and explained the work being carried out on these. Costings of planned work have been confirmed and are ready for appraisal by the Planning Inspector. A Panel member asked when councillors would be informed of the infrastructure being proposed for delivery within the NEGC Project. Richard Bayley explained that NEGC Ltd will respond within the Local Plan process, which requires the local authorities to assess the sustainability appraisals for the Project. The infrastructure plan and financial details will be published when the revised Local Plan viability evidence is submitted to the enquiry. Delivery options will then be appraised.

Richard Bayley informed the Panel that the objective was to produce well-connected, walkable communities, with good connections to other areas and infrastructure that included healthcare and educational facilities. Clinical commissioning groups have been met with to discuss facilities for health.

Questions were raised by the Panel relating to the number of additional jobs expected to be created and employers attracted to the area, the work being done by NEGC Ltd to achieve this and the amount of land being set aside for employment-creation. Richard Bayley explained that there were a range of options being discussed and confirmed discussions were ongoing with employers. He explained that this would be addressed within the master planning to be conducted over the next 18 months. This would cover employment creation and land for employment. Sectors approached by the Project so far include technology (with opportunities around the University), energy providers (especially 'green' energy) and sectors which would benefit from easy links to Stansted and/or Cambridge. This would lead to an improvement in economic performance across North Essex. It was important that the

master-planning process be inclusive of the public and potential employers so that appropriate layout options are included to allow employment opportunities. Current targets for employment land in the developments would be flexible to allow for increases, should there be greater-than-expected interest from potential employers.

The Panel noted NEGC Ltd's position as both having development and planning responsibilities and queried this. Richard Bayley confirmed that he understood the position of NEGC Ltd, and that the company's aim is to build communities rather than just houses.

In response to questions on the three possible delivery options and their respective risk profiles, Richard Bayley explained that risk and benefits analysis would be conducted by the NEGC Ltd Board when it considered the delivery options appraisals. He described the three vehicles and the different risk profiles. A Panel member asked questions relating to potential financial risks which may emerge from land purchases being land-banked until later stages of the Project. Richard Bayley explained the phased approach which had been used in an earlier project he had been involved with in Basingstoke, where long leases had been granted by the land owner to the local council, and the council then took a phased tranches approach to development. Mr Bayley answered questions relating to phased purchases of land, and whether this would increase the value of land in later sales. Options available to address this include compulsory purchase orders and/or private agreements with landowners.

Councillor King was questioned as to alternatives, should the Planning Inspector reject the approach proposed. He explained that the Cabinet would need to immediately discuss options to put forward, should this occur.

Changes in the administration of partner councils were raised by the Panel, their potential effects on the investments due to be made by them to NEGC Ltd, and the risk management implications. Richard Bayley, Councillor King and Ian Vipond answered points raised. They highlighted that income from government and local authorities in 2018/19 had been received, gave assurance that local authorities have affirmed support for the NEGC Project, and confirmed that the Project was not dependent on funding from any single one of the individual councils involved in the Project. Ian Vipond expanded on this to explain that Uttlesford District Council were understood to be proceeding to examination with the Local Plan which include the NEGC Project.

A Panel Member queried differences between the original 2018/19 financial information and the year-end figures circulated to the Panel prior to the meeting. Richard Bayley explained that changes occurred due to the agreed slowing of work following Christmas, a vacancy factor from one seconded officer leaving and others reallocated to work on the Local Plan. Further savings had also been made relating to indirect costs incurred.

The Panel requested that copies of each of the development sites' financial viability appraisals be made available to the Panel for scrutiny, especially those within Colchester Borough. Richard Bayley confirmed that the Panel would be taken through the appraisals and would provide scrutiny at the appropriate juncture, and that he would liaise with Council officers to confirm the correct process and protocols.

The Panel discussed the need for better public presentation of the Garden Community Project, to reduce negative perceptions and emphasise the improvements which are being sought. Members of the Panel requested that the expected formal business plan provides better content on why this Project is being proposed, and the current problems it aims to

mitigate. This, alongside user-friendly documents, will assist councillors to understand the Project and explain it to their constituents. Councillor King agreed that it was vital to agree and show the narrative for this project, and that Cabinet would work to improve clarity, information-sharing with councillors and ensure that public scrutiny would be effective and an important part of the oversight process. He further pledged to provide a clear calendar of future key moments and events in the Project's future.

Panel members highlighted uncertainty regarding planned upgrades to the A12 and A120 which may affect the proposed garden communities. Richard Bayley confirmed that this was not in NEGC Ltd's power to control, but that its input would be given to consultation by Highways England later in 2019. Mr Bayley stressed the importance of the link road proposed between the A120 and A133. Ian Vipond expanded on this to explain that the local authorities involved and the Local Plan all stress the need for upgrades to these main road links. This would be raised with the Planning Inspector once the Garden Communities plans reach the next phase of examination.

Regarding 'Legacy and Stewardship', a Panel Member requested that NEGC Ltd. encourage community investment companies and co-operatives to participate from the outset. Richard Bayley agreed the importance of this and set out a three-stage public/community engagement process for the future.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The Panel noted the report and expressed its thanks to Richard Bayley, Ian Vipond and Councillor King
- (b) The Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise the delivery options appraisal and process, prior to its consideration by Cabinet and for NEGC Ltd to appear before the Panel on at least an annual basis.
- (c) Training to be provided to the Panel to help their scrutiny of NEGC Ltd.

RECOMMENDED to Councillor King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources that:-

- (a) The unredacted 2016 PwC report be provided to the Panel within a month of the meeting;
- (b) A report to be provided to all councillors following each meeting of the NEGC Board;
- (c) The financial viability appraisals for the development sites to be provided to the Panel;
- (d) A 'Plain English' summary of the Government guidance relating to setting up development corporations and oversight/decision-making powers of elected members be provided to all councillors within a month of the meeting;
- (e) Quarterly briefings on the NEGC Project to be provided for all councillors;
- (f) To consider the need for better public presentation of the Garden Community Project, to reduce negative perceptions and emphasise the improvements which are being sought and to ensure that the NEGC Business Plan reflected this by including information on why this Project was being proposed, and the current problems it aimed to mitigate.

210. Year End 2018/19 Performance Report including progress on the Strategic Plan Action Plan 2018-21

Dan Gascoyne, Chief Operating Officer, introduced this report alongside Councillor David King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources. He highlighted and explained those key performance indicators (KPIs) which had been rated 'red' (where targets were not met).

KPI K1H5 (Average time to re-let Council Homes) had not met its target due to the initial contractor for CBH not being able to meet its obligations. A new contractor was appointed on 12 April and the situation is improving. The Panel were informed that a low rate of void properties and a high proportion requiring significant work following long tenancies had increased the average time to re-let. Dan Gascoyne acknowledged the missed target but noted that this target had been met last year (when there had not been contractor problems). This would be discussed with Colchester Borough Homes but the intention was to keep a challenging target for this KPI.

KPI K1P1 (Processing of Planning Applications – Major) had not met target due to loss of experienced staff and a number of appeals and referrals to the Secretary of State. The small number of major applications meant that a delayed application has a significant effect on the KPI. Richard Block agreed to provide more detail regarding this after the meeting.

KPI K1R3 (Sickness Rates) have proven problematic but short-term illness figures are improving. Long-term illness remains difficult to reduce, but this is being overseen by assistant directors across the Council. The Waste and Zone Teams have been particularly hit by long-term sickness. Richard Block, Assistant Director – Environment, in particular is working to address this. Mitigating action includes changing workloads to suit capabilities, identifying drivers for long-term sickness and working with employees to get them back to work as soon as possible. Councillor King stressed the importance of heeding and responding to results of staff surveys and supporting Council staff. A member of the Panel noted that this KPI target is always missed and that this should be considered when setting the future target so that this provides a reasonable aspirational target which portfolio holders and management can work to achieve. Dan Gascoyne confirmed that this had changed from 7.5 days per employee to 9, but with the plan to gradually reduce this back to 7.5 days over the next three years.

A Panel member queried to what extent sick leave taken had resulted from the work carried out by officers in their day-to-day duties and asked for detail on work being carried out to identify where this is occurring. Councillor King agreed to provide written detail regarding this. Analysis of this is ongoing, service by service, and certain service duties had already been identified as being more likely by their nature to have an effect on officer health. He informed the Panel that he would be reviewing this with Human Resources in coming weeks, but that CBC compared well to other public-sector employers. Richard Block underlined this point and reinforced the point that front-line staff working in hard conditions had fewer options for working flexibly or carrying out their duties whilst unwell.

KPI K1W1 (Residential Household Waste per household) is currently red but the rate of recycling is strong, with the Council third best performer in the region.

Councillor King noted that significant changes have been made in the style of presenting this performance data to improve clarity and understanding. The Council is performing well in comparison to other authorities against which it is benchmarked, and focus will be on the few under-target performance areas.

In response to questions, Richard Block explained that, regarding KPI K1W3 (Missed collections), each individual missed collection reported was counted as one report, irrespective of the number of properties which might be affected. There had been a spike in missed collections caused by a recent gastrointestinal illness which had caused some staffing difficulties. To mitigate future risks of this sort, Cabinet have approved work to improve the depot which will help increase hygiene and counter sickness issues.

The Panel noted strong performance in a range of KPIs, including rent collection, council tax collection, housing benefit claims processed, and affordable homes delivered.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The Panel noted the report;
- (b) Further information be provided by Councillor King , Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, including a breakdown of sickness numbers and analysis carried out on sickness rates.
- (c) The Panel paid tribute to the work carried out by officers during 2018/19 which had led to overall good performance and successes.

211. Financial Monitoring Report – End of Year 2018/19

Darren Brown, Finance Manager (Business Partner), introduced this report covering the financial performance of General Fund Services and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the year 2018/19. This was a draft position, with auditors onsite to confirm its contents.

Darren Brown highlighted that the forecast for 2019/20 had been made based on the expectation that the Council's outturn position would be on-budget for 2018/19. The year-end position had been better than expected for 2018/19 and the conditional surplus added to the Council's balances and would be considered by Cabinet in due course.

In response to questions regarding the level of Council reserves, Councillor King informed the Panel that the reserves levels were conservatively forecasted to be £1.9m, with an additional likely £300k. The level of reserves is now calculated to be £2.4m.

RESOLVED that the Financial performance during 2018/19 be noted

212. Capital Expenditure Monitor 2019/20

Mark Jarvis, Finance Manager (Technical) presented this report on the Council's Capital Programme for 2019/20 and highlighted the main points and figures.

The Panel enquired as to why the entry for Sheepen Road Phase 2 was marked as 'Red' (behind target) in Appendix A. It was clarified that Q3 had been 'Red' but that the year-end result was 'Green' (on-target). Confusion had been caused by the Q4 progress column being placed to the left of the column for Q3. Mark Jarvis agreed to switch these two columns in future reports to aid clarity.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

213. Work Programme 2019/20

The Panel considered the draft Programme for the municipal year. The Health and Social Care Alliance was recommended to be scheduled for the 6 August meeting, and the Chair proposed that the Bus Review item remain on the Programme for 16 July. Only Essex County Council had provided a written response to the most recent questions sent to stakeholders, so the Panel directed that these be resent to those yet to reply, including the service providers who had engaged in earlier stages of the Review, with a repeated request for their input.

A Panel member reminded the Panel that commitments had been relating to scrutiny of the NEGC Project which needed to be scheduled. Furthermore, a request was made for the Colchester Business Investment District (BID) to be invited to present their work to the Panel.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2019-20 be agreed subject to:-

- (a) The scheduling of the additional items relating to the scrutiny of NEGC Ltd, as set out in minute...
- (b) The Colchester BID to be invited to appear before the Panel.

Report of	Assistant Director, Policy & Corporate	Author	Paul Cook
Title	Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) – Annual Review 2018/19		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report is part of the cycle of monitoring treasury management in the Council. The TMS covers all the borrowing and investment activities of the Council. The TMS sets prudential indicators for the year.
- 1.2 The Council sets its treasury management strategy as part of the annual revenue budget process. The 2020/21 Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) will therefore go forward to Cabinet in January 2020 and on to Council in February 2020. The 2018/19 TMS was approved by Council on 21 February 2018.
- 1.3 The Governance and Audit Committee receives a mid-year TMS update to ensure compliance with the agreed TMS. For the 2018/19 Strategy the report was considered on 13 November 2018. For the 2019/20 TMS the mid-year update is programmed for 26 November 2019.
- 1.4 The Scrutiny Committee receives an annual review looking back at the completed financial year. This report is the annual review for 2018/19
- 1.5 This 2018/19 annual review confirms that the Council operated within all TMS prudential indicators set for 2018/19.

2 Action required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider the TMS Annual Review 2018/19.
- 2.2 To note that the Council operated in accord and are within the boundaries of the TMS prudential indicators set for 2018/19
- 2.3 The Panel is asked to note the satisfactory performance of Link Asset Services.

3 Reason for scrutiny

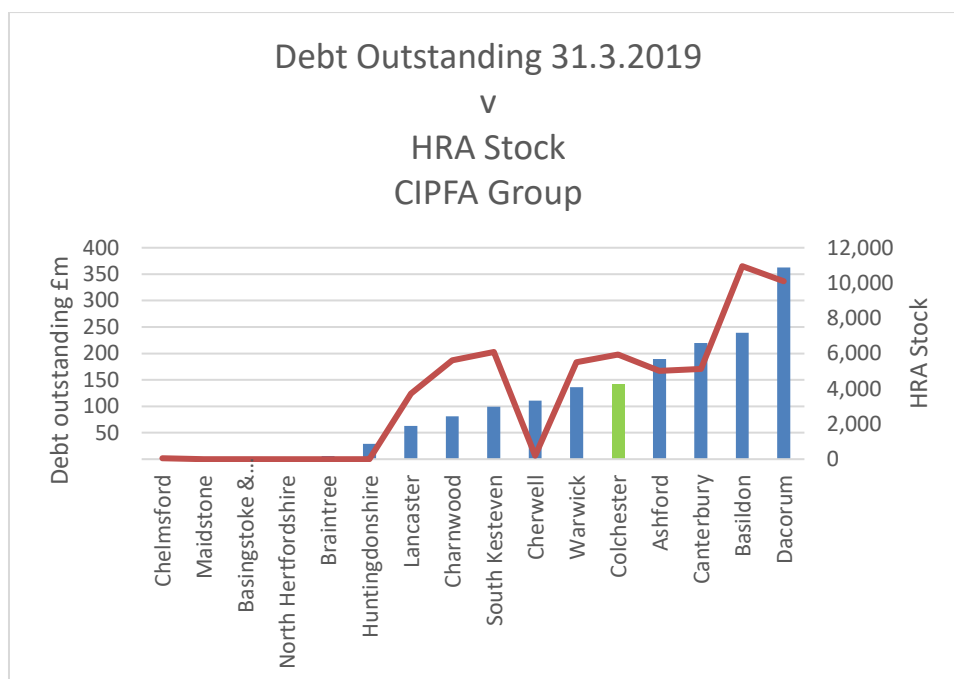
- 3.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice requires the Council to produce three main reports each year, which are all required to be scrutinised and reviewed:
 - the Treasury Management Strategy Statement.
 - the Mid-Year Treasury Management Report.
 - the Annual Treasury Management Review (this report).

4 Treasury Management Review 2018/19

- 4.1 The Annual Treasury Management Review 2018/19 is attached as a separate document.

5. Borrowing Performance

- 5.1 To meet 2018/19 funding requirements the Council used internal funds in place of borrowing externally. It was not considered necessary to commit to external borrowing as the cost would have been significantly higher than the very low cash investment rates available for internal funds. External borrowing therefore remained at £141.094 million throughout the year. This approach will require review for 2020/21. An increase in Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates could result in increased long-term costs for the Council when the Council borrows to replace the internal funds.
- 5.2 The chart shows Colchester's borrowing compared to its CIPFA neighbour group. Whilst the Council is not the highest borrower, many of the group do not have a borrowing exposure. As also set out in the chart, borrowing levels are largely explained by past decisions on housing stock retention and the authorities' position at the self-financing housing settlement. The affordable level of debt for Colchester will be further considered in the Council's Capital Strategy. It is expected this will be reported to Cabinet in September 2019.



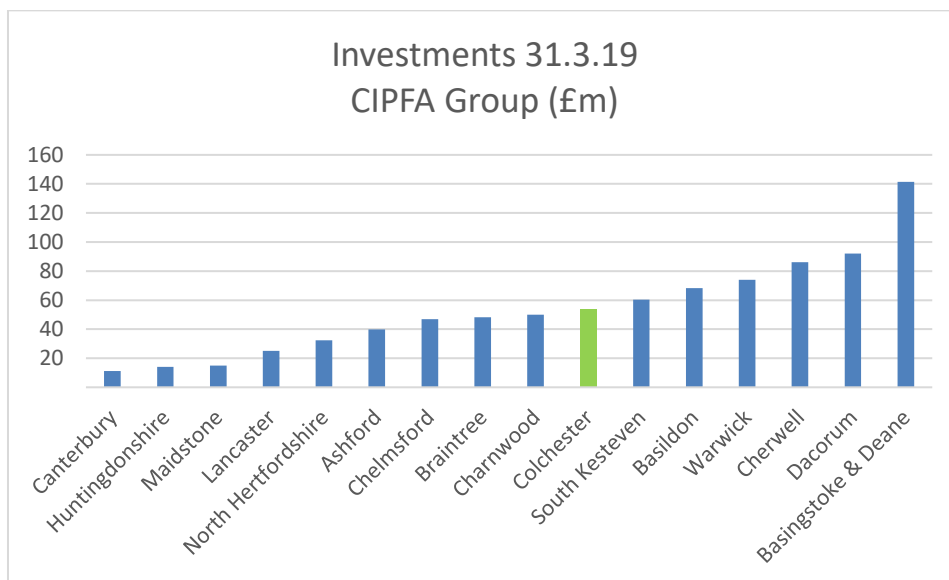
TMS Prudential Indicators Borrowing				
Indicator	2017/18	2018/19 Strategy	2018/19 Actual	Comments
	£m	£m	£m	
General Fund Capital Expenditure	17.005	38.604	25.104	2018/19 underspend already reported to Scrutiny
New Borrowing Requirement	1.291	10.263	8.835	Lower than planned as programme underspend
Capital Financing Requirement	154.864	163.952	162.355	As above
Authorised Borrowing Limit	169.635	180.252	141.094	Operated within the limit
Operational Boundary	140.537	159.613	141.094	Operated within the limit

Actual financing as a proportion of net revenue stream general fund	10.93%	12.26%	8.15%	Operated within the limit
Maturity Structure				
< 1 year	3.9%	15%	3.9%	No new borrowing is undertaken that will cause a limit to be exceeded. Over time the period to maturity of existing loans decreases and may cause variations. The strategy limits exceed 100% in total allowing some flexibility to choose loan maturities.
1 to 2	0.0%	15%	0.0%	
2 to 5	15.6%	15%	15.6%	
5 to 10	0.5%	15%	0.5%	
10 to 20	10.2%	30%	10.2%	
20 to 30	25.5%	30%	25.5%	
30 to 40	25.1%	40%	25.1%	
40 to 50	12.9%	40%	12.9%	
50+	6.3%	10%	6.3%	
Average borrowing rate	4.46%		4.46%	No change from 2017/18 as no new borrowing.

6. Investment Performance

- 6.1 The investment policy reflected the Council's low appetite for risk. The financial year continued the challenging low return investment environment of previous years. The Council's investments at the end of the year totalled £54.212 million. The rate of return achieved was 0.94%. To understand comparative performance an analysis of 2018/19 results will be reported to a future Panel meeting. Colchester appears to have an average level of investment for its comparator group.

TMS Prudential Indicators Investment				
Indicator	2017/18	2018/19 Strategy	2018/19 Actual	Comments
	£m	£m	£m	
Creditworthiness	Link creditworthiness system			All investments within policy
Country Limits		AA-		All investments within policy
Non-UK not to exceed		£15m		All investments within policy
Return on in-house funds (LIBID 3 Month)	0.41%	0.72% (Actual LIBID)	0.78%	Improved return
Maximum Principal invested 365 days +	5.000	5.000	0.481	All investments within policy



7. Treasury Management Advisors

- 7.1 The Council employs Link Asset Services to provide a treasury management consultancy service. Their remit includes advice on borrowing, investments, counterparty credit details and general capital accounting information. Their performance was considered satisfactory in 2018/19.

8. Strategic Plan references

- 8.1 Prudent treasury management underpins the budget strategy required to deliver all Strategic Plan priorities.

9 Publicity considerations

- 9.1 **Appendix A** to the annual report is confidential.

10 Financial implications

- 10.1 Interest paid and earned on borrowing and investments are reflected in the Central Loans and Investment Account (CLIA). Out-turn figures for 2018/19 show a favourable variance of £97k. This variance arises from additional borrowing costs offset by higher investment due to the level of cash balances available.

11 Risk management implications

- 11.1 Risk Management is essential to effective treasury management. The Council's Treasury Management Policy Statement contains a section on treasury Risk Management (TMP1).
- 11.2 TMP1 covers the following areas of risk all of which are considered as part of our treasury management activities:
- Credit and counterparty risk
 - Liquidity risk
 - Interest rate risk
 - Exchange rate risk
 - Refinancing risk
 - Legal and regulatory risk
 - Fraud, error and corruption, and contingency management
 - Market risk

12 Other standard references

12.1 Having considered consultation, equality, diversity and human rights, community safety, and health and safety implications, there are none that are significant to the matters in this report.

Appendices

Appendix A – List of investments (Confidential)

Appendix B – Glossary of abbreviations and initialisms

Appendix C – Treasury Management Review 2018/19

Glossary of abbreviations used in this report

APPENDIX B

- ALMO** an Arm's Length Management Organisation is a not-for-profit company that provides housing services on behalf of a local authority. Usually an ALMO is set up by the authority to manage and improve all or part of its housing stock.
- CE** Capital Economics – is the economics consultancy that provides Capital Asset Services, Treasury solutions, with independent economic forecasts, briefings and research.
- CFR** Capital Financing Requirement – the council's annual underlying borrowing need to finance capital expenditure and a measure of the council's total outstanding indebtedness.
- CIPFA** Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy – the professional accounting body that oversees and sets standards in local authority finance and treasury management.
- CPI** Consumer Price Inflation – the official measure of inflation adopted as a common standard by countries in the EU. It is a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a predetermined basket of consumer goods and services, such as transportation, food and medical care. It is calculated by taking price changes for each item in the basket of goods and averaging them.
- ECB** European Central Bank – the central bank for the Eurozone.
- EU** European Union.
- EZ** Eurozone – those countries in the EU which use the euro as their currency.
- Fed** The Federal Reserve, often referred to simply as "the Fed," is the central bank of the United States. It was created by the Congress to provide the nation with a stable monetary and financial system.
- FOMC** The Federal Open Market Committee – this is the branch of the Federal Reserve Board which determines monetary policy in the USA by setting interest rates and determining quantitative easing policy. It is composed of 12 members--the seven members of the Board of Governors and five of the 12 Reserve Bank presidents.
- GDP** Gross Domestic Product – a measure of the growth and total size of the economy.
- G7** The group of seven countries that form an informal bloc of industrialised democracies – the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom – that meets annually to discuss issues such as global economic governance, international security, and energy policy.
- Gilts** Gilts are bonds issued by the UK Government to borrow money on the financial markets. Interest paid by the Government on gilts is called a yield and is at a rate that is fixed for the duration until maturity of the gilt, (unless a

gilt is index linked to inflation); yields therefore change inversely to the price of gilts i.e. a rise in the price of a gilt will mean that its yield will fall.

- HRA** Housing Revenue Account.
- IMF** International Monetary Fund – the lender of last resort for national governments which get into financial difficulties.
- LAS** Link Asset Services, Treasury solutions – the council’s treasury management advisers.
- LIBID** The London Interbank Bid Rate is a ‘bid’ rate; i.e., the rate at which a bank is willing to borrow from other banks. It is the ‘other end’ of the LIBOR (an offered, hence ‘ask’ rate, the rate at which a bank will lend).
- MHCLG** The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – the Government department that directs local authorities in England.
- MPC** The Monetary Policy Committee is a committee of the Bank of England, which meets for one and a half days, eight times a year, to determine monetary policy by setting the official interest rate in the United Kingdom, (the Bank of England Base Rate, commonly called Bank Rate), and by making decisions on quantitative easing.
- MRP** Minimum Revenue Provision – a statutory annual minimum revenue charge to reduce the total outstanding CFR, (the total indebtedness of a local authority).
- PFI** Private Finance Initiative – capital expenditure financed by the private sector i.e. not by direct borrowing by a local authority.
- PWLB** Public Works Loan Board – this is the part of H.M. Treasury which provides loans to local authorities to finance capital expenditure.
- QE** Quantitative Easing is an unconventional form of monetary policy where a central bank creates new money electronically to buy financial assets, like government bonds. This process increases the supply of liquidity to the economy, and aims to stimulate economic growth through increased private sector spending, and return inflation up to target. This policy is employed when lowering interest rates has failed to stimulate economic growth and inflation to acceptable levels.
- Once QE has achieved its objectives, it will be reversed by selling the bonds the central bank had previously purchased, or by not replacing debt that matures. The aim of this reversal is to ensure that inflation does not exceed its target once the economy recovers from a sustained period of depressed growth and inflation, and economic growth and increases in inflation are threatening to gather too much momentum if action is not taken to ‘cool’ the economy.
- RPI** The Retail Price Index is a measure of inflation that measures the change in the cost of a representative sample of retail goods and services. It was the UK standard for measurement of inflation until the UK changed to using the

Glossary of abbreviations used in this report

APPENDIX B

EU standard measure of inflation – CPI. The main difference between RPI and CPI is in the way that housing costs are treated. RPI is often higher than CPI.

TMSS The annual treasury management strategy statement report that all local authorities are required to submit for approval by the full council before the start of each financial year.

VRP A voluntary revenue provision to repay debt, in the annual budget, which is additional to the annual MRP charge, (see above definition).

Annual Treasury Management Review 2018/19

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2018/19. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).
- 1.2 During 2018/19 the minimum reporting requirements were as follows:
 - an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (Council 20 February 2019)
 - a mid year treasury update report (Governance & Audit Committee 13 November 2018)
 - an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report)
- 1.3 The regulatory environment places responsibility on members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by members.
- 1.4 The Council confirms that it has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to the annual treasury strategy by the Scrutiny Panel before it was reported to the full Council.
- 1.5 This report summarises:
 - Capital financing activity during the year;
 - Impact of this activity on the Council's underlying indebtedness (the Capital Financing Requirement);
 - The actual prudential and treasury indicators;
 - The overall treasury position;
 - The Treasury Management Strategy for 2018/19;
 - The economy and interest rates;
 - Borrowing activity; and
 - Investment activity.

2 Capital expenditure and financing 2018/19

- 2.1 The Council undertakes capital expenditure on long-term assets. These activities may either be:
 - Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc.), which has no resultant impact on the Council's borrowing need; or
 - If insufficient financing is available, or a decision is taken not to apply resources, the capital expenditure will give rise to a borrowing need.

- 2.2 The actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows the actual capital expenditure and how this was financed.

	2017/18 Actual £'000	2018/19 Original £'000	2018/19 Actual £'000
General Fund capital expenditure	9,038	29,416	14,878
HRA capital expenditure	7,967	9,188	10,226
Total capital expenditure	17,005	38,604	25,104
Resourced by:			
· Capital receipts	2,768	15,818	2,280
· Capital grants	2,928	3,436	1,840
· Capital reserves	5,195	3,634	2,544
· Finance Leases	230		0
· Revenue	4,593	5,454	9,605
New borrowing requirement	1,291	10,263	8,835

3 The Council's overall borrowing need

- 3.1 The Council's underlying need to borrow for capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This figure is a gauge of the Council's debt position. The CFR results from the capital activity of the Council and what resources have been used to pay for the capital spend. It represents the 2018/19 new borrowing requirement (see above table), and prior years' net or unfinanced capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for by revenue or other resources.
- 3.2 Part of the Council's treasury activities is to address the funding requirements for this borrowing need. Depending on the Capital Programme, the Finance team organises the Council's cash position to ensure sufficient cash is available to meet the capital plans and cash flow requirements. This may be sourced through borrowing from external bodies (such as the Government, through the Public Works Loan Board [PWLB] or the money markets) or utilising temporary cash resources within the Council.
- 3.3 The Council is required to make an annual revenue charge, called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), to reduce the CFR. This is effectively a repayment of the non-Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing. This differs from the treasury management arrangements which ensure that cash is available to meet capital commitments. External debt can also be borrowed or repaid at any time, but this does not change the CFR. The total CFR can also be reduced by:
- the application of additional capital financing resources (such as unapplied capital receipts); or
 - charging more than the statutory revenue charge (MRP) each year through a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP).
- 3.4 The Council's 2018/19 MRP Policy (as required by MHCLG Guidance) was approved as part of the Treasury Management Strategy Report on 21 February 2018.

- 3.5 The Council's CFR for the year is shown below and represents a key prudential indicator. It includes on balance sheet leasing schemes that increase the Council's borrowing need. No borrowing is actually required against these schemes as a borrowing facility is included in the contract.

	31-Mar-18 Actual £'000	31-Mar-19 Original £'000	31-Mar-19 Actual £'000
CFR			
Opening balance	154,597	154,984	154,864
Add unfinanced capital expenditure (as above)	1,291	10,263	8,835
Add on-balance sheet leasing schemes	230	0	0
Write-off of finance lease creditor	(675)	0	(22)
Less MRP/VRP	1,254	1,745	1,322
Closing balance	154,864	163,502	162,355

- 3.6 Borrowing activity is constrained by prudential indicators for net borrowing and the CFR, and by the authorised limit.
- 3.7 In order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Council should ensure that its **gross borrowing position** does not, except in the short term, exceed the planned limit. The limit is the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Council is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. The table below highlights the Council's gross borrowing position against the CFR. The Council has complied with this prudential indicator.

	31-Mar-18 Actual £'000	31-Mar-19 Original £'000	31-Mar-19 Actual £'000
Gross borrowing position	141,094	145,701	141,094
CFR	154,864	163,502	162,355

- 3.8 The **Authorised Limit** is required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. Once this has been set, the Council does not have the power to borrow above this level. The table below demonstrates that during 2018/19 the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.
- 3.9 The **Operational Boundary** is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.
- 3.10 The **actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream** indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long-term obligations cost net of investment income) against the net revenue stream.

	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000
Authorised limit	169,635	180,252
Maximum gross borrowing position	141,094	141,094
Operational boundary	140,537	159,613
Average gross borrowing position	140,075	141,094
Financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream	10.93%	8.15%

4 **Treasury position as at 31 March 2019**

- 4.1 The Council's debt and investment position is organised to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to manage risks within all treasury management activities. Procedures and controls to achieve these objectives are well established both through Member reporting (as detailed in the introduction), and through officer activity detailed in the Council's Treasury Management Practices. At the end of 2018/19 the Council's treasury position (excluding finance leases) was as follows:

	31-Mar-18 Principal £'000	Rate/ Return %	31-Mar-19 Principal £'000	Rate/ Return %
Fixed rate funding:				
PWLB	104,594	3.80%	104,594	3.80%
LOBO	5,500	3.63%	5,500	3.63%
Market	9,000	4.28%	9,000	4.28%
Local Authorities	2,000	1.02%	2,000	1.02%
Stock Issue	20,000	8.79%	20,000	8.79%
Total debt	141,094	4.46%	141,094	4.46%
CFR	154,189		161,680	
Over/ (under) borrowing	(13,095)		(20,586)	
Investments - In house	47,901	0.41%	54,212	0.94%
Total investments	47,901	0.41%	54,212	0.94%

- 4.2 The maturity structure of the debt portfolio is shown below. It should be noted that for LOBO loans, the maturity date is deemed to be the next call date. They are therefore all shown as short-term debt:

	Approved Maximum %	31-Mar-18 Actual		31-Mar-19 Actual	
		£'000	%	£'000	%
Under 1 year	15.0	5,500	3.9	5,500	3.9
1 - 2 years	15.0	22,000	15.6	0	0.0
2 - 5 years	15.0	0	0.0	22,000	15.6
5 - 10 years	15.0	700	0.5	700	0.5
10 - 20 years	30.0	14,300	10.2	14,300	10.2
20 - 30 years	30.0	36,000	25.5	36,000	25.5
30 - 40 years	40.0	35,394	25.1	35,394	25.1
40 - 50 years	40.0	18,200	12.9	18,200	12.9
Over 50 years	10.0	9,000	6.3	9,000	6.3
		141,094	100.0	141,094	100.0

- 4.3 All of the Council's investments were for a period of less than one year, and there was not any exposure to variable rates of interest.
- 4.4 The outturn position for the Central Loans and Investment Account (CLIA) is shown below. This shows the outturn position as being a favourable variance of £92k.

CLIA	Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Variance £'000
Total Interest Paid	6,536	6,593	57
Less: HRA recharge	(5,667)	(5,637)	30
Total less HRA	869	956	87
Total Investments	(269)	(530)	(261)
Less: Item 8 credit	30	112	82
Total less HRA	(239)	(418)	(179)
Total CLIA	630	538	(92)

- 4.5 The CLIA comprises the Council's borrowing costs and investment income. It is difficult to predict and can be affected by several factors. The majority of the Council's debt is on fixed rates reflecting the longer-term nature of the borrowing decisions. Investments are generally made for shorter periods, making returns more variable. This mix is generally more beneficial when interest rates are high or increasing. It is important to add that the exposure to interest rate movements is regularly monitored to minimise risks to changes in returns. The reasons that have contributed to the above variances include:
- The variance against borrowing costs relates to the additional external borrowing that was taken on during the year. This is mitigated by a proportion of this cost being charged to the Housing Revenue Account.
 - The variance against interest income is as a result of a higher level of funds than was envisaged being available for investment, and the rates against some investments being greater than the budgeted figure. A proportion of this income was moved to the Housing Revenue Account, based on average HRA balances and investment returns.

5 *The strategy for 2018/19*

- 5.1 The expectation for interest rates within the treasury management strategy for 2018/19 anticipated that Bank Rate would start increasing by 0.25% in quarter 3 and then only increase once more before March 2020. There would also be gradual rises in medium and longer term fixed borrowing rates during 2018/19 and the two subsequent financial years. Variable, or short-term rates, were expected to be the cheaper form of borrowing over the period. Continued uncertainty in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis promoted a cautious approach, whereby investments would continue to be dominated by low counterparty risk considerations, resulting in relatively low returns compared to borrowing rates.

- 5.2 The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served well over the last few years. However, this was kept under review considering the long-term saving resulting from borrowing at very low rates, and to avoid incurring higher borrowing costs in the future. A cost of carry remained during the year on any new long-term borrowing due to the difference between borrowing costs and investment returns.
- 5.3 The investment policy reflected the Council's low appetite for risk, emphasising the priorities of security and liquidity over that of yield. The main features of the policy were that the Council will apply minimum acceptable credit criteria in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties, which also enables diversification and avoidance of concentration risk. Investment decisions also applies the creditworthiness service provided by Link Asset Services, which combines data from credit rating agencies with credit default swaps and sovereign ratings.
- 5.4 The Council would only use approved counterparties from countries with a minimum credit rating of 'AA-'. The Council will consider longer-term deals if attractive rates are available within the risk parameters set by the Council. The suggested budgeted return on investments placed for periods up to 100 days during the year was 0.25%.
- 5.5 Investment returns remained low during 2018/19 but were on a gently rising trend in the second half of the year.
- 5.6 **Changes in strategy during the year** – the strategy adopted in the original Treasury Management Strategy for 2018/19 approved by the Council on 20 February 2018, was reviewed as part of the mid-year update report. There were no proposed changes to the strategy as a result of this review.

6 *The economy and interest rates*

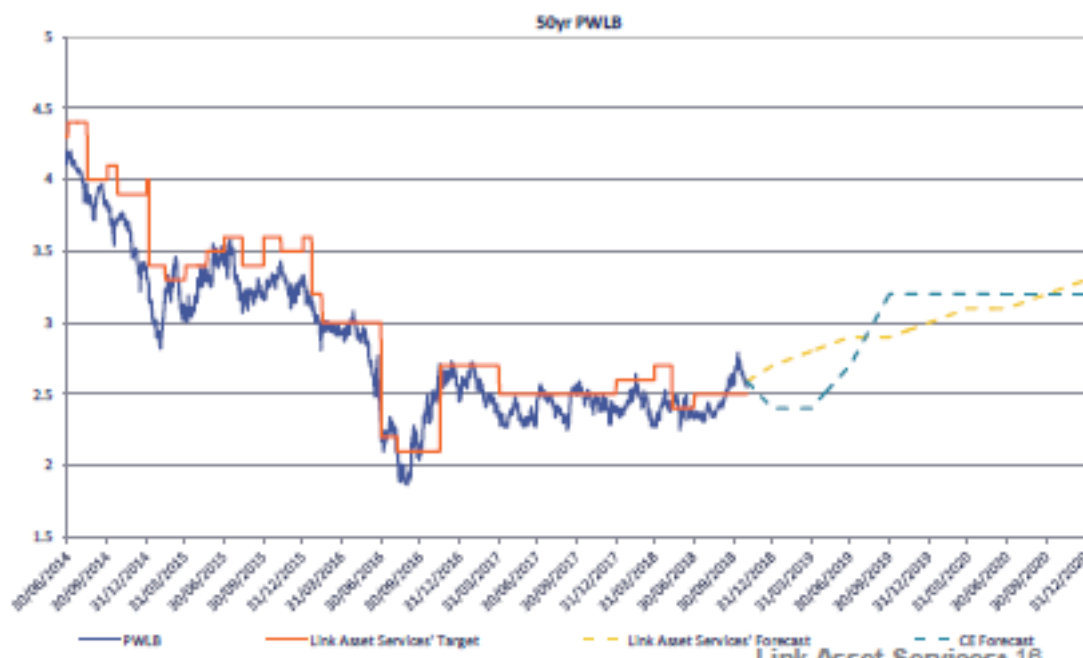
- 6.1 During the calendar year of 2018, there was a growing market expectation after April 2018 that the MPC was heading in the direction of a rate rise. In August 2018, the bank of England raised the base rate from 0.5% to 0.75% which was only the second rise in over a decade. Short-term investment further after the MPC meeting in November after concerns over the risk of rising inflation and needing to take action sooner than was expected. Since January 2019, the uncertainty around Brexit has had a depressing effect on interest rate expectation which is likely to continue until there is a greater certainty over the direction of exiting the EU.
- 6.2 For equity markets, this has seen a considerable slump during the year only to pick up and stabilise toward the end of March. The FTSE 100 hit a peak in May reaching 7,900 however concerns uncertainty in the market created a sell-off which saw the FTSE 100 reach 6,500 in December only to stabilise in March at around 7,300.

7 *Borrowing*

- 7.1 PWLB 25 and 50 year rates have been stable during the year with minor fluctuations. However, shorter rates were on an increase over the second part of

the year given concerns over inflation. During the year, the 50-year PWLB target (certainty) rate for new long term borrowing was 2.50% in the first 3 quarters however rose to 2.75% in the last. The table for PWLB borrowing rates below shows, for a selection of maturity periods, the movement in rates during the course of the financial year.

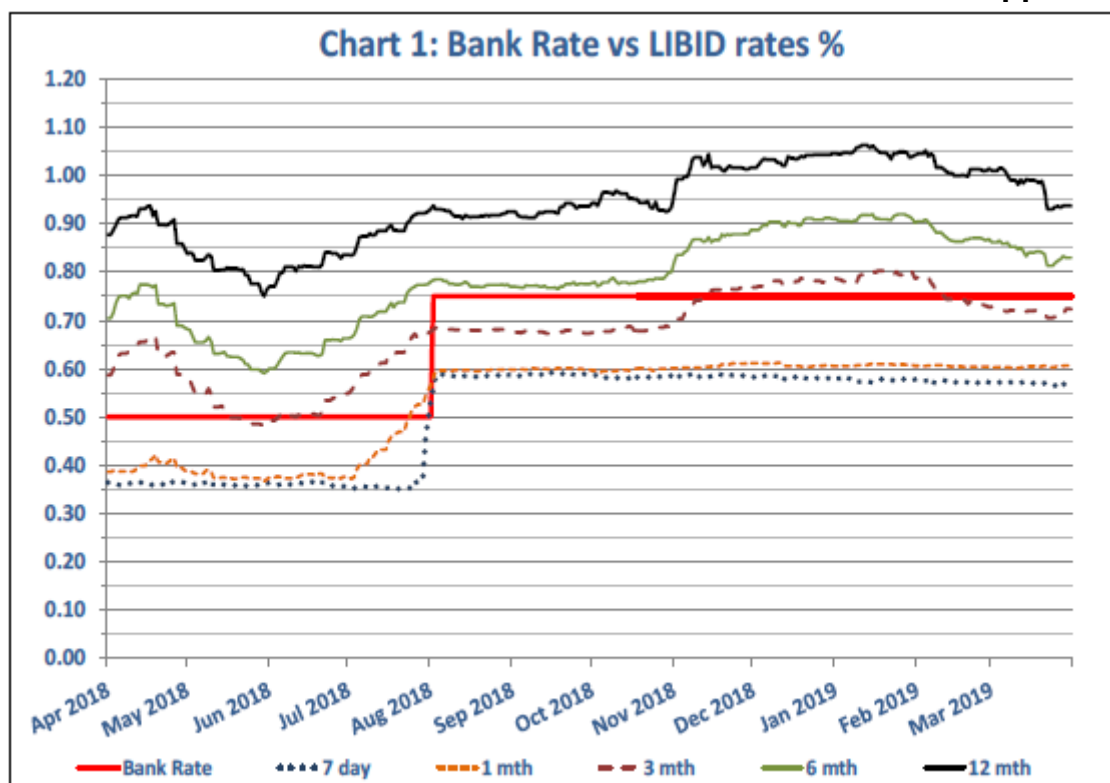
7.2



- 7.3 The Council's total debt outstanding at 31 March 2018 was £141.1m, which had not changed since the previous year. Due to the low rates available, this resulted in the average interest rate on the Council's debt at the end of the year reducing to 4.46%.
- 7.4 The Council's approach during the year was primarily to use cash balances to finance new capital expenditure. This minimised counterparty risk incurred on investments, and maximised treasury management budget savings as investment rates were much lower than most new borrowing rates.

8 Investments

Investments rates for 3 months and longer have been on a rising trend during the second half of the year in the expectation of Bank Rate increasing from 0.50% and reached a peak at the end of March. Bank Rate was duly raised from 0.50% to 0.75% in August 2018 and remained at that level for the rest of the year. However, further increases are expected over the next few years.



- 8.1 The Council manages its investments in-house, and its cash balances comprise revenue and capital resources and cash flow monies. The Council's investment policy is governed by MHCLG investment guidance, which was implemented in the Annual Investment Strategy approved by the Council on 20 February 2018. This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties, and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps, bank share prices etc.)
- 8.2 The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, the Council had no liquidity difficulties, and no institutions in which investments were made during 2018/19 had any difficulty in repaying investments and interest in full.
- 8.3 The Council's cash balances comprise revenue and capital resources and cash flow monies. The Council's core cash resources comprised as follows:

	31-Mar-18 £'000	31-Mar-19 £'000
Balance Sheet Resources		
Balances	9,491	12,498
Earmarked Reserves	23,963	23,080
Provisions	2,628	4,526
Capital Reserves	2,004	4,044
Total	38,086	44,148

- 8.4 The Council's internally managed funds earned an average rate of return of 0.84%. The comparable performance indicator is the average 3-month LIBID rate (London Interbank Bid Rate – the rate charged by one bank to another for a deposit) (uncompounded), which was 0.72%.

Details	2017/18 %	2018/19 %
Temporary Investments	0.43	0.83
Overnight and Deposit Account	0.39	0.72
Total	0.41	0.78
Benchmark (3 month LIBID)	0.29	0.72
Return as a % of the Benchmark	143.4%	108.0%

- 8.5 The Council had temporary investments totalling £54.3m outstanding as at 31 March 2019. Of this, £32.5m relates to fixed-term deposits that are due to mature during 2019/20, £17.8m is held in 'AAA' rated money market funds, and the remaining £5m is held in notice accounts. All of the deposits were made in accordance with the 2018/19 Annual Investment Strategy. A full list of investments held as at 31 March 2019 is shown in **Appendix A** (confidential).

16 July 2019

Report of	Assistant Director (Policy and Corporate)	Author	Owen Howell Tel. 282518
Title	2020/21 Budget Strategy – Scrutiny Panel Covering Report		
Wards affected	N/A		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report on the 2020/21 Budget Strategy, as considered by Cabinet on 10 July 2019 is provided for the Panel's consideration.

2. Action required

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Panel is requested to consider and note the 2020/21 Budget Strategy, Medium Term Financial Forecast and Budget Timetable, presented to the Cabinet on 10 July 2019, and refer any comments or concerns back to the Cabinet for further consideration.

3. Reasons for Scrutiny

- 3.1 The review of the Council's Budget Strategy and Timetable is one of the responsibilities of the Scrutiny Panel, as set out under the Terms of Reference for the Panel within the Constitution.

4. Standard and Strategic Plan References

- 4.1 Scrutiny and challenge is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing.
- 4.2 Scrutiny is a key function to ensure decisions have been subject to full appraisal and that they are in line with the Council's strategic aims. The role of scrutiny is also important in helping to check that risks are identified and challenged.
- 4.3 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self-governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance, of which scrutiny is a part, underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.
- 4.4 There is no publicity, equality and diversity, human rights, community safety, health and safety, risk management or financial implications in this matter.

5. Appendix

- 5.1 Appendix 1: 2020/21 Budget Strategy, Medium Term Financial Forecast and Budget Timetable

Report of	Assistant Director, Policy & Corporate	Author	Paul Cook ☎ 505861 Darren Brown ☎ 282891
Title	Budget Strategy 2020/21		
Wards affected	All		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This is the start of the timetable to update the Medium Term Financial Forecast and set the 2020/21 Budget.
- 1.2 The report sets how the Council will develop a financially sustainable budget strategy that continues to deliver the Council's strategic aims. The main budget factors and risks are considered.
- 1.3 The report also explains the timetable for detailed budget preparation and budget consultation.

2 Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the pre-audit outturn position for the financial year 2018/19.
- 2.2 To note the approach and timetable for the 2020/21 budget.
- 2.3 To note the updated Medium-Term Financial Forecast as set out in Section 7.
- 2.4 To note the amendments to the capital programme set out in Section 10.5

3 Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Council is required to approve a financial strategy and timetable in respect of the 2020/21 budget and MTFF.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 None at this stage

5 Background Information

Financial Overview 2018/19 and 2019/20

- 5.1. The Pre-Audit Outturn report for the year to 31 March 2019 was presented to the Scrutiny Panel on 11 June 2019.
- 5.2. The following table provides a breakdown of the end of year position showing an overall net general fund underspend after carry forwards of £263k:-

Table 1 – Summary of 2018/19 Outturn						
		Actual	Budget	Var	C/fwd	Net
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
1	Corporate & Democratic Core	(407)	(503)	96	-	96
2	Policy & Corporate	9,323	10,024	(701)	499	(202)
3	Executive Management Team	657	655	2	-	2
4	Community	1,674	2,075	(401)	401	-
5	Customers	4,091	4,177	(86)	280	194
6	Environment	4,673	4,615	58	218	276
7	Sub-Total Services	20,011	21,043	(1,032)	1,398	366
8	<i>Net Recharge Movement</i>					
9	NEPP	(115)	(110)	(5)	5	-
10	CIMS	1,035	1,019	16	(16)	-
11	Benefits	(709)	(727)	18		18
12	General Fund / HRA	7,179	7,368	(189)	-	(189)
13	HRA Contingency (cost in 12)		84	(84)		(84)
14	Total Services	27,401	28,677	(1,276)	1,387	111
15	Pensions	725	715	10		10
16	CLIA	538	630	(92)	92	-
17	Provision for Bad Debts	(347)	-	(347)		(347)
18	Miscellaneous	99	-	99		99
19	Other Government Grants	(86)	-	(86)	18	(68)
20	General service related items		422	(422)	352	(70)
21	Business Rates	(6,295)	(5,262)	(1,033)	1,033	-
22	Business Rates Pool	(645)	-	(645)	645	-
23	Collection Fund	(607)	(609)	2		2
24	Total	20,783	24,573	(3,790)	3,527	(263)

Table 1 Abbreviations

HRA (Housing Revenue Account)
 NEPP (North Essex Parking Partnership)
 CIMS (Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service)
 CLIA (Central Loans and Investment Account)

- 5.3. When the 2019/20 budget was set, it had been assumed for planning purposes that the end of year position would be on budget. The outturn therefore improves the balances position. In summary, it means that balances are £530k above the recommended level as shown Table 2.

Table 2 – Change to Balances 2018/19		
Factor	£'000	Note
Uncommitted / unallocated balances above prudent level	267	Position when 2019/20 budget was set.
Outturn underspend	263	Position reported to Scrutiny Panel
Balances above agreed level	530	

Financial Year 2019/20

- 5.4. At this stage in the financial year it is difficult to assess potential variances (both positive and negative). The overall position will be reported throughout the year to Scrutiny Panel and Governance and Audit Committee.

6 Strategic Context

- 6.1 The Council like many other local authorities faces a challenging financial climate, and the Budget Strategy therefore emphasises affordable and sustainable solutions. Commercial approach and income generation are important, as is maximising external funding opportunities.
- 6.2 The 2020/21 budget setting must be undertaken during a period with an exceptionally high level of economic and political uncertainty. This arises primarily from uncertainty as to the date and arrangements for EU Exit, associated delays in parliamentary business and lack of clarity about the Government's Spending Review and the impact on public sector funding. A number of key economic metrics, that would impact on the Council's financial position, will be sensitive to this context, including interest rates, inflation, the local government settlement and general level of economic activity locally and nationally.
- 6.3 The Strategic Plan 2018-21 sets out the Council's vision and priorities for Colchester and the activities based around the following four themes:
- Growth – Ensuring all residents benefit from the growth of the Borough.
 - Responsibility - Encouraging everyone to do their bit to making our borough even better
 - Opportunity - Promoting and improving Colchester and its environment
 - Wellbeing - Making Colchester an even better place to live and supporting those who need most help

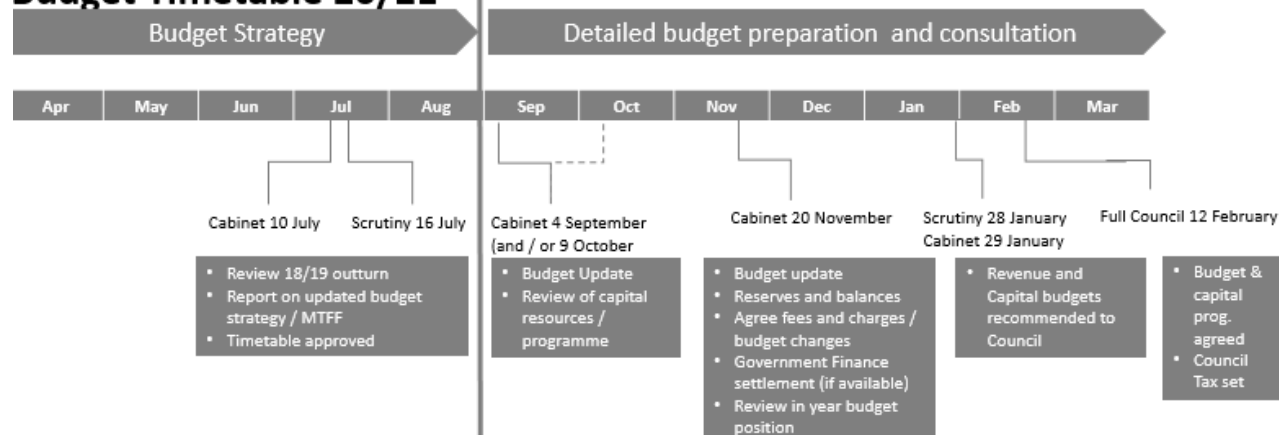
6.4 In support of the Strategic Plan, several priority themes have been identified by Cabinet as set out below:

- **Strengthen our Communities** to reduce isolation and loneliness and to help the physical, mental, economic and social well-being of our residents and safeguarding the vulnerable, with better support and facilities for our young people.
- **Preserve and Protect our Environment** tackling pollution, setting an example in reducing waste, improving recycling and reducing single use plastics, and pressing businesses across the borough to do the same.
- **Conserve and strengthen our natural habitats** around our beautiful borough, helping our community to know, love and use our woods and parks, planting more trees, developing community orchards and a new Colchester Wood.
- **Secure the infrastructure** growing communities need, within a Local Plan that puts people before the developers.
- **Deliver new and quality council and affordable housing**, tackling poor landlords.
- **Celebrate our arts and heritage and exciting future**, highlighting the best, ancient or modern, that Colchester has to offer visitors and residents, promoting Colchester as an inclusive, accessible and welcoming destination.
- **Explore the opportunity for cleaner and better public transport for** Colchester, including community and 'hopper' buses and joined up cycle paths, and to actively encourage cycling and walking.
- **Enhance community safety** with yet more police officers on our streets and more robust action on anti-social behaviour
- **Deliver a new Town Centre Master Plan** to make our town centre more of a destination to visit and to make the most of our public space.
- **Respond to the risks to public health from drugs** and the misuse of and addiction to pain killers and legally available opioids, and alcohol, and encourage NHS, police and community action that will save lives, helping users to keep safe.
- **Get a better deal from the County Council**, work with County to devolve powers and the money back to Colchester, to fix our broken roads and keep our libraries open.
- **Build the prosperity of our borough**, promoting innovation and the IT and creative sectors, supporting our Business Improvement Districts and the University of Essex, and promoting Colchester as a business investment district destination of choice.

7 Budget Timetable

7.1 The 2020/21 timetable is set out below.

Budget Timetable 20/21



8 Financial Context

8.1 In order to operate sustainably the Council plans its finances on a long-term basis in the MTFF. The MTFF is rolled forward annually. Set out below are the key drivers of the MTFF and any change in assumptions.

Table 3 – MTFF Assumptions 2020/21

	Changed assumptions	
1	MTFF originally assumed negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) of £446k would apply	Now assumed that negative RSG will not be applied to any local authority
2	Pay inflation continues at 2%, plus allowance for unavoidable contract inflation.	Increased assumption of 3%, adding £100k per year
	Unchanged assumptions	
3	£5 or 3% council tax increase in each successive financial year	No change
4	That 2019/20 is delivered on budget.	No change
5	All existing planned savings fully delivered	No change
6	2018/19 delivered on budget	A £263k underspend was achieved by sound management and taken to balances
7	A reduction in district council funding by £500k steps in each future financial year from 2020/21	No Change
8	New Homes Bonus to continue. £1m is included in the 2019/20 base budget then falling by £200k steps. Any additional NHB will be used for projects supporting the delivery of the Strategic Plan and Alliance Priorities.	No change

9	General Fund balances maintained at a minimum prudent level of £1.9m	No change, though balances currently stand at £2.43m
10	2019/20 business rates assumption of £6.057m including growth of £1.600m above the baseline and £200k pooling gain. (In 2018/19 assumptions were exceeded by £1.033m.)	No change
11	Employer's contribution to the ECC pension fund	No change following 2019 revaluation
12	The budget approach for the HRA will continue to be fully integrated within the General Fund budget process, with the final budget report and rent setting being included within the overall budget and Council Tax decisions.	No change

- 8.2 The overall initial 2020/21 MTFF position on these changed assumptions is set out in the table below. This does not include any new savings or additional pressures for 2020/21 at this stage.
- 8.3 The position on business rates combines several factors. These will not be finalised until later in the budget process, including any government changes as part of the move to increased retention.
- 8.4 Council tax will be finalised later in the budget process, including growth and performance in 2019/20.
- 8.5 It is not expected there will be any increase in employer pension contribution rates. However this will not be finalised by ECC and their actuaries until much later in the budget process.

Table 4 – 2020/21 MTFF Starting Position				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Net Budget	20,206	20,275	20,873	21,809
Settlement Funding Assessment (with assumed reduction as Table 3)	(4,257)	(3,800)	(3,343)	(2,886)
NNDR Growth (including pooling gain)	(1,800)	(1,800)	(1,800)	(1,800)
New Homes Bonus	(3,415)	(2,890)	(2,837)	(2,804)
Other Grants	(65)	0	0	0
Council Tax	(12,072)	(12,556)	(13,062)	(13,588)
Reserves / Collection Fund	1,403	1,401	1,401	1,401
Cumulative Gap	0	630	1,232	2,132
Gap at 2019/20 Budget Setting	0	976	1,478	2,278

9 Budget Strategy

- 9.1 The MTFF assumptions are prudent without exaggerating the gap. Only in the event of fundamental changes to key drivers will the assumptions be revised.
- 9.2 The resilience of the MTFF will continue to be assessed, drawing on best practice including standard criteria published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
- 9.3 There has been a widespread and effective programme of service reviews in recent years with new working arrangements and management structures in place. To allow these new ways of working to stabilise, a repeat of this process is not considered appropriate to deliver the required savings. Savings and income proposals will therefore be delivered through specific opportunities and business cases.
- 9.4 Some of the key areas of potential opportunity being explored are set out in Table 5 below:

Table 5 – Budget Savings Strategy		
1	Digital services	A better customer offer allowing more flexibility to book services and pay online
2	Commercial approach	To build on previous achievements to maximise the return on commercial assets and generate increased service income
3	Fees and charges.	To ensure fees and charges are set at an appropriate level
4	Procurement	To achieve better value for money and social value outcomes through expert procurement across a range of supplies and services
5	Invest to save	To direct capital resources into infrastructure and facilities that increase service efficiencies
6	Amphora dividend growth	To examine the potential to further increase commercial returns
7	Partnership working.	To continue to increase efficiency by partnership working with other agencies and stakeholders
8	External funding	To draw in external resources to help meet service cost or achieve capital investment

- 9.5 Budget pressures will need to be accommodated by improved value for money and a continuing commercial approach to service delivery.
- 9.6 Any significant corporate pressures or funding changes that impact on the budget will need to be addressed during budget preparation

10 Capital Programme

- 10.1 The Council has an ambitious capital programme that will be further developed to maximise service delivery and investment potential. A revised Capital Strategy will be reported to September Cabinet.
- 10.2 One of the principles of the emerging Capital Strategy will be the use of capital resources to generate income gains and revenue savings. This will reduce revenue budget pressures.
- 10.3 The Revolving Investment Fund is the key mechanism to implement major investments with a focus on delivering key strategic objectives.
- 10.4 Capital proposals will be assessed for their fit to corporate objectives and their long-term affordability within the MTFF.
- 10.5 To progress the redevelopment of the Jacks site, £400k was ringfenced to support the capital costs of this scheme, including archaeological works. The scheme will bring in a rental income of £42k per annum, protect a locally listed historic building and support local jobs. Due to the timing of the need for the additional funding, the Leader of the Council gave approval under Cabinet Procedure Rule 22. This procedure requires that the action taken shall be submitted to this meeting.

11 Strategic Plan References

- 11.1 The 2020/21 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Forecast will be underpinned by the Strategic Plan priorities and will seek to preserve and shift resources where needed to support these priorities.

12 Financial implications

- 12.1 As set out in the report.

13 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 13.1 Consideration will be given to equality and diversity issues in respect of budget changes proposed as part of the budget process. This will be done in line with agreed policies and procedures including production of Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate.

14 Risk Management Implications

- 14.1 As set out in the report

15 Consultation

- 15.1 The budget strategy and timetable ensure that information is available for scrutiny and input from all Members. Detailed information will be available prior to the final budget report being submitted to Cabinet and approval by Council in February 2020. The Leader of the Opposition will have the opportunity to meet with officers to assist with consideration of any alternative budget proposals.

14.4 The normal consultation with business ratepayers and parish councils will take place.

15. Other Standard References

15.1 There are no direct Publicity, Human Rights, Community Safety or Health and Safety implications as a result of this report.

Background Papers

Revenue and Capital Outturn reports to Scrutiny Panel – 11 June 2019

Scrutiny Panel

Item
12

16 July 2019

Report of	Assistant Director of Policy and Corporate	Author	Owen Howell Tel. 282518
Title	Annual Scrutiny Report		
Wards affected	None		

This is a report setting out the work of the Scrutiny Panel during 2018/19

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the work of the Scrutiny Panel during 2018/19 and requests that the Panel recommend the report to Council for approval on 17 July 2019.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the draft Annual Scrutiny Report.
- 2.2 The Panel is asked to recommend this report to Council for approval on 17 July 2019.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Constitution states the Scrutiny Panel shall report annually to the full Council on its work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.
- 3.2 The purpose of the report is to inform the Council of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel, and for the Council to form an opinion of the effectiveness of the scrutiny function. The final report will be submitted to full Council for consideration and approval following endorsement by scrutiny panel members.
- 3.3 This Scrutiny Report is a descriptive record of the scrutiny reviews undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel 2018/19.

4. Standard and Strategic Plan References

- 4.1 Scrutiny and challenge is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing.
- 4.2 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self-governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

Scrutiny Panel Annual Report 2018-19

This Annual Report demonstrates the contribution made by the Scrutiny Panel at Colchester Borough Council.

Scrutiny Panel Role

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

The Scrutiny Panel in 2018/19

The function of the Scrutiny Panel continues to be important, given the challenge of providing services with limited resources. This requires the Council to innovate and look for different ways to deliver the same level of service.

The success of Scrutiny Panel reviews depended on the involvement of Councillors, Council officers, expert witnesses and members of the public, and the Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel would like to thank everyone for their contribution to the work of the Scrutiny Panel in 2018/19.

The low level of call-ins and matters of urgency on Scrutiny Panel agendas suggest that the governance arrangements within the Council are working effectively.

Portfolio Holders have continued to regularly attend to answer questions on items on the Scrutiny Panel's agendas that fall within their remit to take a lead on major reviews and to discuss policy, spending and performance.

During 2018/19 Scrutiny Panel members have considered and requested training in areas to help assist their scrutiny and overview work. Such training areas include on Treasury Management, which is to be scheduled in the 2019/20 municipal year.

Members are asked to consider whether the scrutiny and review process is a function that remains effective, ensuring the critical friend challenge to the executive policy and decision making that drives improvement in public services.

Prominent Reviews at Colchester Borough Council

The Scrutiny Panel held a number of reviews during 2018/19.

At its August 2018 meeting, and following a request from the Panel's Chair, the Scrutiny Panel reviewed the operation of Locality Budgets and the spending carried out on items from them. Analysis of how these Budgets were spent by elected members was reviewed alongside control processes and restrictions in place to ensure that items of spending were appropriate and in line with the Council's guidelines regarding Locality Budgets. As a result of this review, the Panel resolved that Locality Budget guidelines be circulated to all councillors, and an all-member briefing be arranged to cover the rights and responsibilities

of councillors with regard to spending from these Budgets. Furthermore, the Panel resolved that research be carried out to assess the most effective way in which to monitor Locality Budget spending.

The Scrutiny Panel requested to review progress made in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough, through the Colchester Homelessness Strategy 2014-19. This took place in October and gave Panel Members the opportunity to be briefed on work by Colchester Borough Homes and the Council to carry out their statutory duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act and to achieve homelessness prevention. The Panel was also briefed on the main drivers behind current homelessness.

During 2018/19 the Panel continued its review into bus service provision within the Borough. This involved further questions being sent to the stakeholders who had participated in the initial information-gathering session (Essex County Council, commercial bus service providers and Community360 (as a local not-for-profit provider of community transport)). This review is expected to conclude in 2019/20.

Pre-Decision Scrutiny

Pre-scrutiny enables the Scrutiny Panel to examine an issue in depth and make proposals to the Cabinet or portfolio holder in advance of that decision being taken.

The Scrutiny Panel each year undertakes pre-decision scrutiny of the budget, which was put to the Scrutiny Panel on 29 January 2019, and the six-monthly and year-end Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action Plan, which went to the Panel on 21 August 2018 and 11 December 2018.

In July 2018, the Panel reviewed the Environment and Communities Futures Business Case, consisting of proposals for service changes and financial savings, following a review of these directorates' service areas. The Panel resolved that it was satisfied with the proposed changes.

In January 2019 The Panel reviewed proposals for service changes within the Waste and Zones teams. These changes were designed to make savings and increase income, whilst preserving front-line services. They also took account of changes in demand and the market for recyclable materials. The Panel provided feedback and discussed the likely effects of growth in the Borough. Although concern was raised regarding the proposal to no-longer collect certain single-use plastics, although this was explained as being due to there being no current demand for these and no way for the Council to get rid of them. The Panel resolved not to make any recommendations relating to these proposals

Partnership arrangements

A review of Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) Performance 2018/19 took place at the meeting on 16 October 2018. The Chief Executive and Chair of Colchester Borough Homes attended with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for housing. The Panel received a presentation on the performance of Colchester Borough Homes as well as information on the Homelessness Reduction Act and successful applications by the Council and CBH for government funding to cover the cost of carrying out statutory duties. An update was also provided to inform the Panel of progress in the substantial

fire risk assessment programme. Risk was relatively low, but further mitigating actions had been identified.

As part of the Crime and Disorder Committee, the Safer Colchester Partnership was reviewed on 11 September 2018, and at an additional meeting on 26 February 2019. This additional meeting had been scheduled by the Committee to reflect the increase in crime and anti-social behaviour matters and enforcement work for the Committee to consider. The review provided information on the work of the Safer Colchester Partnership during 2018-19, progress on the Town Centre Action Plan, the work of the Community Safety Team and provided updates from Police officers covering their work over the year. The introduction of additional Police Community Support Officers (through extra funding provided by Colchester Borough Council) was also covered. The Panel thanked the representatives for attending the meetings and responding to members questions and noted the work of the Partnership.

Call-in

One valid call-in was received during the 2018/19 municipal year, considered by the Scrutiny Panel on 22 February 2019. The call-in came from Councillor Lewis Barber, supported by four fellow councillors. It requested that Scrutiny Panel scrutinise the decision taken by Cabinet, on 30 January 2019, to adopt a new strapline. The Cabinet decision approved a new strapline which not consistent with a recommendation made by the Heritage and Tourism Task and Finish Group. The grounds given for this call in were:

- Failure to consider all options available
- Failure to have regard to due consultation
- Lack of clarity of aims and desired outcomes
- Lack of presumption for openness
- Proper procedures were not followed

The Panel considered the request submitted, representations made by councillors, members of the public and the MP for Colchester, and answers provided by Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Business and Culture.

Following discussions and questioning, the Panel agreed that concerns remained regarding the ground raised that 'proper procedures were not followed' in regard to the lack of reasoning given for not following the recommendation of the Heritage and Tourism Task and Finish Group. The Panel referred the decision back to Cabinet in order for an explanation to be given as to its decision not to follow the recommendation made to it. Cabinet considered this recommendation on 13 March 2019 and provided an explanation covering this decision.

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)

There were no CCfA issues brought to the attention of Scrutiny Panel during 2018/19.

Decisions taken as a matter of urgency

There was one decision taken as a matter of urgency during 2018/19. This involved a Portfolio Holder decision taken under Special Urgency Provisions to approve a financial settlement with a contractor on the Axial Way Pumping Station. This decision was made by Councillor Nick Barlow, Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services, and was noted by the Panel.

Task and Finish Group

There were no Task and Finish Groups commissioned by the Scrutiny Panel 2018/19.

Appendix

Appendix A – Schedule of Meetings and Reviews for 2018/19.

Schedule of meetings and reviews

Scrutiny Panel 2018/19

Councillor Davies (Chairman), Councillor Bentley (Deputy Chairman), Councillor Coleman, Councillor Hayter, Councillor Luxford Vaughan, Councillor Scordis, Councillor Wood.

12 June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Monitoring Report – End of Year 2017/18 • Capital Expenditure Monitor 2017/18
17 July 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment and Communities Futures Business Case. • Implementation Plan to introduce Plastic Recycling Collections to Flats. • 2019/29 Budget Strategy, Medium Term Financial Forecast and Budget Timetable • Treasury Management - Annual Review 2017/18 • Annual Scrutiny Report
21 August 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year End 2017-18 Performance Report including progress on Strategic Plan Action Plan • Locality Budgets – analysis of spend • Strategic Plan Spending Priorities • Bus Review Letter – Further
11 September 2018 (Crime and Disorder Committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)
16 October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision taken under Special Urgency Provision: Axial Way Pumping Station. • Review of Colchester Borough Homes Performance 2017/18. • Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. • Local Council Tax Support 2019-2020
27 November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan Spending Priorities • Financial Monitoring Report – April to September 2018 • Capital Expenditure Monitor – April to September 2018
11 December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Support Futures Review • Half-year 2018/19 Performance Report including progress on 2018-21 Strategic Plan Action Plan
29 January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019/20 General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital Programme

	<p>and Medium-Term Financial Forecast, Housing Revenue Accounts Estimate and Housing Investment Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20 • Waste and Zones Futures Business Case • Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2019/20
22 February 2019 (Additional Meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call in of Cabinet Decision on the Recommendation of the Heritage and Tourism Task and Finish Group
26 February 2019 (Crime and Disorder Committee - Additional Meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Colchester Partnership
19 March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Colchester Borough Council's Partnership Arrangements with the Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre and Firstsite • North Essex Garden Communities Project (NB This item was postponed until 11 June 2019).

16 July 2019

Report of	Assistant Director Policy and Corporate	Author	Owen Howell
Title	Bus Review: Further actions.		☎ 282518
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Panel at its meeting in September 2017 agreed to review the bus services operating in Colchester. Further details of the scope and history of the review are set out in section 4 of this report. However, at its meeting in August 2018 the Panel determined that a series of questions should be sent to Essex County Council (ECC), the bus operators and Community 360.
- 1.4 This report was produced at the request of the Panel to review the responses provided by Essex County Council, bus companies and Community360 to these questions. The responses received from Essex County Council and Arriva to these further questions can be found at Appendices C and D respectively. The Panel is also invited to consider the next steps for the review and what further action, if any, it wishes to undertake to conclude the review.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 To review and note the responses received from Essex County Council, the bus operators and Community 360 to the Panel's request for information agreed by the Panel in August 2018.
- 2.2 To consider what further action needs to be taken in respect of the review of bus services in Colchester.

3. Reason for Scrutiny

- 3.1 The Panel received a request from a member of the Panel to review bus services in Colchester. Following the creation of a scoping document, the Panel agreed for a review to be added to the Scrutiny Panel work programme.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 In July 2017 Councillor Scordis submitted a scoping document to the Panel to request a review be held to examine the operations of bus companies in Colchester Borough. In September 2017 the Scrutiny Panel resolved to hold this review and objectives and a formalised scope were agreed.
- 4.2 The review followed the objectives as agreed at the September meeting.

These included:

- To understand the strategic role and benefits of bus operation and how it can best serve the community;
- To investigate and scrutinise what bus companies are doing to:
 - Improve the punctuality of services
 - Increase bus usage
 - Reduce emissions
 - Make buses more accessible
 - Communicate with passengers when services are cancelled or altered.
- To improve the dialogue between bus companies that operate in the Borough and Colchester Borough Council, Councillors and Residents.

4.3 The Scrutiny Panel meeting on 16 April 2018 was attended by representatives of bus companies, Community360 and ECC. Prior to this meeting, officers had collected information from the invited organisations and the Panel discussed this with the representatives in attendance. A summary of the discussion held can be found in the minutes extract found at Appendix A. A summary of the written answers provided by the invited organisations can be found at Appendix B.

4.4 The Panel resumed its consideration of the issue in August 2018: A follow-up letter with questions to operators and ECC was approved by Panel. The questions related to the Bus Services Act 2017, Colchester Blueprint and follow-up questions based on the objective areas for the review and responses to the Panel's initial questions.

4.5 In November 2018 a response was received from Essex County Council. There were no responses from operators.

4.6 At its meeting on 29 January 2019 the Panel resolved to schedule an update on the review for the 2019-20 municipal year. At the Panel meeting held on 11 June 2019 the Panel further resolved that this update be scheduled for its meeting on 16 July 2019, and that the supplementary questions be re-sent to those bus companies which had not yet provided responses.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

5.1 There are no specific implications regarding Human Rights, however there are implications regarding equality and diversity, in that the efficient and comprehensive operation of local bus services should take account of the needs of disabled service users.

6. Standard References

6.1 There are no particular references to consultation or publicity considerations or financial, community safety, health and safety or risk management implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 The operation of efficient and environmentally-sustainable bus services within Colchester Borough has reference to the following themes and priorities of the Strategic Plan 2018-21:

- Growth:
 - Help make sure Colchester is a welcoming place for all residents and visitors;
 - Ensure residents benefit from Colchester's economic growth with skills, jobs and improving infrastructure;
 - Work with partners to create a shared vision for a vibrant town centre.
- Opportunity:
 - Promote green technologies through initiatives such as SMART Cities;
 - Promote initiatives to help residents live healthier lives.

Appendices

Appendix A - Minutes extract from Scrutiny Panel meeting on 16 April 2018.

Appendix B - Summary of initial written answers to the review, as provided by the invited organisations and companies.

Appendix C - Responses to the Scrutiny Panel's follow-up questions, as provided by Essex County Council.

Appendix D - Responses to the Scrutiny Panel's follow-up questions, as provided by Arriva.

**EXTRACT FROM THE SCRUTINY PANEL MINUTES OF THE MEETING
HELD ON 16 APRIL 2019**

160. Bus Review

Councillor Fox (by reason being an employee of Community360) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).

Geoff Whybrow, Transport Representative, Tiptree Parish Council

Geoff Whybrow, Tiptree Parish Council Transport representative attended the Scrutiny Panel meeting to highlight his disappointment with public transport in Tiptree. Mr Whybrow stated that Tiptree was one of the largest growing villages in Essex and that the last bus back from Colchester Town Centre was at 7pm in the evening. This means that for those without a car they cannot access the evening economy and other facilities in Colchester Town Centre. This also causes significant issues for those attempting to return on the train from London.

Geoff Whybrow informed the Panel that an Essex County Council supported evening service between Tiptree and Colchester had recently been withdrawn. Despite user surveys conducted by Tiptree Parish Council highlighting the level of patronage it is not expected that the supported service will return. Geoff Whybrow reiterated that the Parish Council are disappointed at the withdrawal of the supported service and feel that something needs to be done to increase public transport provision in Tiptree.

Elizabeth Trellis, Transport Representative, East Donyland

Elizabeth Trellis attended the meeting as the Transport Representative for East Donyland Parish Council. Ms Trellis raised the issue of the shuttlebus that has provided a link to the standard bus service, following a road closure by Anglian Water in the Parish.

Ms Trellis informed the Panel that the bus provided was not access friendly and that stopping times had been incorrectly advertised. Accurate information regarding stopping times had been circulated through the village following a resident borrowing the schedule from the bus driver and photocopying the details.

Ms Trellis also highlighted difficulty with congestion at bus stops in Colchester Town Centre, which results in buses stopping in different locations to their allotted bus stop.

Heather Carnes

Heather Carnes attended the meeting to have her say regarding her disappointment of the withdrawal bus route 66a. Ms Carnes highlighted that the bus service had run for forty years, providing public transport to those residents on Barnhall Avenue, Mountbatten Drive and Abbots Road.

Heather Carnes highlighted that residents with access problems may not be able to walk to the nearest bus stop now this service has been removed. Heather Carnes stressed that residents want to see the bus service returned to the original route.

Nick Chilvers

Nick Chilvers highlighted that he was a frequent user of buses, and supported the return of the 66a route. Mr Chilvers questioned why the service was cut as it has inconvenienced a lot of residents in the area. For those with accessibility issues the nearest bus stop is now too far to get to. Mr Chilvers suggested that it would not require too much creative thinking between Essex County Council, Colchester Borough Council and First Bus to bring at least one service an hour to the 66a route. It was also highlighted that later in the year a new Lidl would be built on this route bringing additional passengers to the location.

Mr Chilvers questioned whether previous suggestions to improve the Town Centre, such as removing the uncontrolled pedestrian crossing on the High Street outside of the George Hotel and improving the curbs near bus stops to allow better access and prevent buses from sticking out into the road, would be carried out.

Mr Chilvers also requested that better information regarding the bus services be available at bus stops.

Cllr Rosalind Scott

Councillor Scott, attended the meeting and echoed many of the comments made about accessibility of the bus services and asked what further steps were being taken to make them more accessible.

Councillor Scott also highlighted the importance of public transport in being the answer to air quality issues and not the cause. Councillor Scott requested information on the number of buses that are now low emission and whether there were plans for electric buses or smaller and more frequent services that avoid major roads. She also suggested that air quality could become a condition of licensing buses.

Councillor Scott raised two further points. The first was related to the concern around traffic if garden communities are built and the requirement to make transport

sustainable. The second point was regarding home to school transport in Wivenhoe which is still not meeting the needs of children or families in the community.

Bus Review – Information Gathering

Councillor Davies thanked those who attended to have their say. Councillor Davies, then welcomed the bus company representatives for attending the Panel. Councillor Davies highlighted that this is an information gathering session, with a further discussion occurring in the next municipal year. Attendees were then invited to provide a brief introduction to the Panel.

Anthony Comber, Business Development Lead, Arriva Buses

Anthony Comber stated that his role within Arriva was to work with business and Councils to develop enhanced solutions for bus services and develop how Arriva can move forward as a bus company. Anthony Comber gave apologies to the Panel from Arriva's Managing Director, Glen Shuttleworth who was unable to attend the Scrutiny Panel meeting.

Antony Comber highlighted that Arriva is a Europe wide company that includes many different forms of transport, including ferries, trains and electric cars. Mr Comber mentioned a new Arriva click service that operates smaller vehicles in a zonal area. These services can be matched to different communities and deliver a better service to customers within that area.

Going forward, Antony Comber confirmed that Arriva have introduced their first electric bus on the FastTrack route. Lots of different strands and technologies are now becoming available to make it easier to link public transport together and let people leave the car at home.

Tracy Rudling, Chief Executive, Community360

Tracy Rudling informed the Scrutiny Panel that Community360 is a charity and one of the projects within the charity is to run community transport in Colchester. The service is for those who are unable to access public transport for a number of reasons, such as rurality or disabled access. Community360 have a fleet of 5 minibuses and 35 volunteer drivers that transport people in their cars as volunteers. By the end of March Community360 completed a total of 50,000 accessible trips. Tracy Rudling highlighted that Community360 also provide opportunities for people to come together through befriending services as well as excursion trips. The charity can provide the door to door service for those with access issues that are not able to get to the nearest bus stop.

In response to queries raised by those attending to have their say about accessibility, Tracy Rudling confirmed that Community360 provide this service in the

Borough, and are able to take individuals to hospital appointments, therapy and social clubs.

Tracy Rudling informed the Panel that the Community360 website provides more information about the services available and that she would be happy to have any further conversations outside of the meeting. Moving forward, Tracy Rudling stated that further links with commercial operators would benefit the service and that they would hope to have these discussions in due course.

Steve Wickers, Managing Director, First Essex

Steve Wickers, provided the Panel with a summary of First buses in the region. The company operates a total of 80 vehicles, with 275 members of staff and 15 routes into Colchester. First Essex carry 8.6m passengers per annum, and covers a total of 6.2m miles. Steve Wickers confirmed that all buses within the fleet are Disability Discrimination Act compliant and that 17 buses in the fleet are of Euro6 diesel standard. A further 9 have been retrofitted to Euro5 level, and following a successful joint bid with Essex County Council and Arriva a further 7 buses will be retrofitted to Euro6 standard.

With regard to punctuality of the service, it currently stands at 91%. Steve Wickers highlighted that back office systems constantly monitor the service to make it more robust and sustainable. This can mean that bus times change or that different roads or resources are placed into the schedule.

First Essex work alongside other bus operators and Essex County Council as part of the bus blueprint. These meetings allows for discussions about the major issues occurring and to look for solutions. With regard to congestion Steve Wickers confirmed that this was getting worse and that action needed to be taken to reduce the congestion in the town centre and improve capacity for buses. Mr Wickers highlighted that this can be approached in innovative ways.

Deborah Fox, Head of Commissioning, Connected Infrastructure (Passenger Transport), Essex County Council

Deborah Fox confirmed that she would take the comments from those who attended to have their say back to Essex County Council. Ms Fox also welcomed the fact that a number of those attending to have their say were already local transport representatives. Local transport representatives from Parishes and other areas are invited to two meetings a year to meet with the bus operators and have their say.

Deborah Fox confirmed that Essex County Council fully supports a bus review in Colchester, and is keen to help people find solutions to help people get round Essex. Essex County Council has a strategy called Getting Around in Essex, which details a number of proposals.

Essex County Council currently allocates £60m in funding for passenger transport services. This includes school services, £30m for discretionary passenger transport, £600,000 for Colchester Park and Ride and £1m for Community Transport across Essex. Essex County Council are also required to review any services that are withdrawn commercially to ensure that no area is left without a bus service. Ms Fox highlighted that this may lead to re-routing of services. Ms Fox also acknowledges that improvements could be made in the communication of these changes.

Ms Fox stated that there is a comprehensive bus network within Colchester, more than other areas of the county. Due to the number of operators in the area, this provides healthy competition and keeps fares low. The aim of the Essex County Council passenger transport team is to keep down costly levels of congestion, which currently cost Colchester an estimated £20m a year.

The Panel were informed that Essex County Council had been one of only 20 local authorities to secure funding from central government for bus retrofitting. Ms Fox confirmed that the County Council is continuing to look at Colchester for green bus initiatives and confirmed that the Park and Ride buses will be the first to be retrofitted.

Ms Fox explained to the Panel that there is an officer programme, incorporating all the bus operators in Colchester, called the Colchester Bus Blueprint. The Blueprint looks at 9 different elements including ticketing, business engagement and marketing. Ms Fox confirmed that members of the Panel would be welcome to attend a meeting if requested.

Ms Fox also informed the Panel of the formal bus quality partnership on route 88, between Colchester and Halstead, which is a legal arrangement and allows members of the public to transfer tickets.

Ms Fox confirmed that there is currently a lot of positive effort between operators and local authority officers. In response to Councillor Scott's query about garden communities, Ms Fox confirmed that Essex County Council are taking the mass transit of people very seriously.

Jeremy Cooper, Managing Director, Heddingham/Chambers (Go-Ahead Group)

Jeremy Cooper informed the Panel that Heddingham/Chambers were sold to the Go-Ahead group in 2012, and that he had been in his role for the past year, bringing experience from a previous role of growing passenger numbers.

Mr Cooper explained that Heddingham and Chambers run twenty buses into Colchester during the day. These include both school services as well as local authority supported services. The intention is to continue to develop the network, with the Sudbury link to be increased to every half hour during May. In addition, a

new service, with support from the County Council, to a village in West Mersea has been launched and has been successful.

With regard to the questions raised by those having their say, Mr Cooper stated that many of the issues relate to ensuring that there are enough paying people on the buses. This enables more buses to run and greater investment in the services. There is an opportunity going forward as 40% fewer young people have driving licenses than there were 40 years ago, which may be a way to increase bus patronage.

Improving passenger demand can be achieved by working together with the local authorities and bus companies through the bus blueprint. The blueprint also helps to highlight the effect of cheap car parking, roadworks and development on bus services and identify areas where further support is required. Mr Cooper highlighted the Essex roadwork permit scheme which ensures that bus companies are aware where routes may be disrupted in advance and can plan accordingly.

Councillor Davies, thanked the attendees for their contributions to the meeting. The Panel asked a number of themed questions relating to the objective as set out in the original scoping report.

Punctuality of Services

Members of the Panel raised queries relating to the punctuality of services and whether there had been a recent shortage of drivers that had punctuality issues.

In response, Steve Wickers, First Essex confirmed that they do not have a current shortage of drivers. Whilst there was a small shortage six months ago this did not affect service provision. Steve Wickers stated that over the year First Essex reached 91% punctuality, which includes the recent snowfall disruption, and the service completed 99% of the expected route mileage.

Mr Cooper, Go-Ahead, confirmed that Hedinghams and Chambers had been short of bus drivers in the past and had previously seen an ageing workforce. Hedingham and Chambers now use a bus drivers training school based in Clacton, which has resulted in the company employing a sufficient number of drivers.

Mr Comber, Arriva, confirmed that Arriva were not short of drivers and whilst there is an ageing workforce they are working hard to encourage younger people to become drivers and engineers. Arriva run two schools in the southern counties and there is a focus on apprenticeship schemes. With regard to punctuality as a whole, Colchester is one of the better depots in the Southern Counties area. Mr Comber highlighted that Arriva are currently trialling a scheme in Southend to manage services through bus tracking, which allows controllers to reassign buses as and when necessary for the benefit of the route and passengers. Mr Comber confirmed that the scheme

looks to manage in front of the bus rather than behind it and is currently being launched in Colchester.

Increasing Bus Usage

In terms of increasing bus usage in Colchester Panel members suggested the use of Oyster style ticketing and contactless payments, which could increase the number of casual bus users, as well as questioning what could be done to challenge old perceptions of bus service reliability and ease of use.

Julian Elliot, First Buses, highlighted that new technology has provided opportunities to challenge the perception of bus services as mobile applications can now provide users with accurate bus locations. This previously wasn't possible and led to uncertainty over whether buses would turn up. Mr Elliot also highlighted the need to make payments easier, which would remove barriers to usage. First Essex currently have a mobile ticketing application which assists with ticket purchasing, and contactless payments will be introduced in the near future, both of which will assist with speed of boarding. Mr Elliot stated that the contactless payments would still be in the form of a traditional bus fare rather than a daily capping system that is in place in London. Mr Elliot also highlighted that within the Borough there is a multi-operator Colchester Borough Card which is available to buy and use on different services. It was confirmed that through the Blueprint meetings, discussions on extending the Colchester Borough Card, and introducing additional types of product could be discussed.

Steve Wickers, First Essex, highlighted the difference between services provided in London and services provided outside of London. Mr Wickers informed the Panel that the congestion charge, in London, aids bus services in reducing congestion, which in turn increases the speed and reliability of bus services, and acts as a deterrent for car drivers. This makes bus services more attractive to use and increases patronage. Outside of London the commercial nature of the bus services means that bus operators need to work with local businesses, universities, hospitals and local authorities to ensure that the services can be profitable. Mr Wickers highlighted to the Panel that with new developments Section 106 funding can be available to ensure that bus services are set up for new residents to encourage bus usage and prevent travel habits changing. It was acknowledged that the perception of bus services is difficult to overcome, but that the service in the Colchester is good and working together with local authorities will improve this perception.

Mr Cooper, Go-ahead highlighted that a significant issue which reduces bus patronage is that buses do not have priority on the roads. Until priority is provided bus services will experience the same level of congestion and disruption as cars. The current priority scheme in place between the Town Centre and Colchester

station has allowed for the introduction of a higher frequency of service between Sudbury and Colchester.

Mr Comber, Arriva, suggested that a longer term ambition is for multimode transport, that would benefit congestion, and potentially some form of public transport subscription system. Mr Comber stated that he would be happy to talk individually with Borough Councillors about what Arriva are planning to do, and confirmed that the Bus Blueprint meetings are moving ideas forward.

A member of the Panel questioned whether there was evidence that cheaper car parking affected the number of bus users. In response Jeremy Cooper, Go-Ahead, stated that in Folkestone when car parking prices were reduced by 30%, bus user figures reduced by 5% on the first day. Bus patronage then started to grow again subsequently due to the trend of the increasing number of users. Mr Cooper also highlighted the Park and Ride service in Canterbury which uses the income from car parking charges in the city centre to fund the service, which keeps the fares low. In addition Mr Cooper highlighted the importance of influencing new residents or workers to use public transport rather than drive. Ensuring that there is a good offer for park and ride services and bus services assists greatly with this. Mr Cooper suggested that people were more put off by congestion in town centres than if car parking prices were raised.

Mr Comber, Arriva, suggested that cheaper car parking creates more congestion. If buses had priority into the town centre, which increased speed and reliability there would be an increase in the number of bus users. Mr Comber highlighted that new technology can provide innovative solutions for bus priority, for example keeping traffic lights green on bus lanes if the bus is running late. Mr Comber also informed the Panel about public transport in Limburg, Holland, where they are piloting a scheme to bring oyster cards and multi-modal transport to a community area.

Steve Wickers, First Essex, reiterated that buses are the best use of road space, which is constrained in Colchester. Providing bus priority allows for a quicker service and increased frequency. Mr Wickers highlighted that there are other towns and cities that have introduced bus only lanes which helps to avoid potential gridlock. Mr Wickers felt that the level of congestion is a reason why people visit other locations.

Councillor Lilley, Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Licensing confirmed that the Council want people to use buses and to reduce congestion. Councillor Lilley highlighted that he receives regular e-mails regarding the cost of car parking in Colchester and that residents may travel to Chelmsford or Braintree instead, which could impact on the town centre. Councillor Lilley highlighted that parking charges are similar to those in Ipswich and Chelmsford, and questioned whether bus operators have special offers for those visiting certain facilities in the town, like a number of car parks provide to entice more bus users.

Councillor Lilley also highlighted that the Council are looking to improve the current situation between the bridge on North Station Road and the roundabout to further improve the route into Colchester Town Centre.

A member of the Panel suggested that further bus priority could be provided into Colchester. It was also suggested that bus companies needed to share the responsibility of attracting new bus users and must work together to get people out of their cars and on to buses, particularly as Colchester is experiencing significant growth.

Mr Cooper, Go-Ahead, confirmed that all parties play a part in attracting new bus users and there may have been times where fares have been incorrect. Mr Cooper confirmed that bus operators do use special offers and test economics on bus services, and Hedingham and Chambers will be introducing new fares as part of a new mobile application. Mr Cooper explained that the reason for suggesting an increase in car parking charges is because this encourages people not to park, which reduces congestion, which subsequently makes fares cheaper or provides a more frequent service. Changing this involves political consensus and partnership agreement.

Deborah Fox, Essex County Council, stated that there is more that could be done together to promote bus services. Promotion of services is included as a commitment within the bus blueprint, and whilst operators will have their own marketing strategies, there have been joint campaigns like 'Catch the Bus Week' in July. This campaign included have a presence in both the Town Centre and the University to highlight bus travel. Ms Fox also informed the Panel that following feedback from Park and Ride users additional promotional material was used to advertise the service in more traditional means, such as a billboard outside of Colchester station. Ms Fox also highlighted that certain aspects of the community are not regularly online and therefore leaflets, posters and adverts in the local press are also used to get the message across.

A member of the Panel also highlighted that fares for families can be quite expensive and may lead them to using the car rather than public transport.

Following a query regarding Garden Communities and the opportunity to encourage sustainable transport and use the most environmentally friendly buses, Ms Fox confirmed Essex County Council are looking at this. Ms Fox highlighted that a Cabinet member had expressed a thirty year vision on mass transit from garden communities and this is something that could be further explored by the bus review. Mr Cooper highlighted an example of FastTrack in Dartford which provides public transport links to a number of communities in Dartford Kent.

Deborah Fox also informed the Panel that new developments are monitored at Bus Blueprint meetings to assist in establishing new services as soon as people move into the new areas.

Reducing Emissions/New Buses

Panel members requested information on the different standards of diesel engines and whether there were plans in place to refresh and modernise the existing bus operator fleets.

With regards to emissions standards, it was explained that Euro6 is currently the best standard available, reducing the level of Nitrogen Oxides.

In response to a query about improving the current fleet of buses, Mr Cooper confirmed that there are vehicles in Hedingham and Chambers fleet that are over ten years old. Mr Cooper stated that they are keen to generate more bus users which would allow for more investment. Mr Cooper highlighted that working with the local authority to reduce congestion, which makes running buses expensive, and increasing car parking charges would assist generating more users and provide a business case for investment in buses.

Julian Elliot, Commercial Manager, First Essex, confirmed that 17 new buses had been brought into the fleet, and each year a certain number of new buses are brought into service in Colchester. Mr Elliot explained that it is a gradual process due to the expense of renewing the fleet. The oldest buses in Colchester are being removed and replaced with more modern stock. Mr Elliot also highlighted that many of the buses now have Wi-fi services available for passengers.

Mr Comber, echoed the comments regarding the evolutionary process of bringing newer buses into different towns. Across the southern counties, Arriva, brought into a total of 80 new buses last year, with a further 40 buses during this year. Not all of the new stock have been earmarked as yet, so some may be coming to Colchester. Mr Comber also highlighted the difficulty in investment in new buses due to the cost of car parking in the Town Centre, which can be lower than a day ticket on the bus. Mr Comber understood the issues in the local market place and would like to see new products and services in the town, however this needed to have commercial viability.

Accessibility

A member of the Panel raised the issue of accessibility of the shuttle bus service that had been installed in East Donyland as a result of the Anglian water repairs. The member requested information regarding which company was responsible for providing the service.

Chris Seaman, Essex County Council, confirmed it is the responsibility of the company that is carrying out the roadworks. In this instance Anglian Water contacted Essex County Council to establish their options, which was to either work with First to provide a service or arrange one by themselves and they opted for the latter.

With regard to access to services, Tracy Rudling urged Councillors to pass the details of Community360 to any residents that have difficulty in getting out of their homes. Tracy Rudling highlighted that Community360 would help to find a solution to assist them in accessing the services they need.

Communication with Passengers and Councillors

In relation to communication about cancellations and complaints about buses a member of the Panel queried whether the bus companies and Essex County Council had direct contact lines.

In response, Essex County Council stated that there isn't a specific named individual, instead a contact centre is used due to the volume of queries received. There is also a passenger transport e-mail inbox, a bus passenger newsletter and a member enquiries system for Essex County Councillors. Essex County Council also have a live twitter feed that includes information as well as the local transport representative meetings which take place during the day and provide a direct opportunity to speak to the bus companies.

Steve Wickers, First Essex, confirmed that First have a call centre. This is placed outside of the local area, however due to the technology available providing real time information about bus services this information can be passed on to local residents. Members of the public can also use the mobile application to find out the location of buses in real-time, and there is a live twitter feed providing updates.

Jeremy Cooper confirmed that Hedingham and Chambers do have a contact number based in Colchester, which is available for a set number of hours during the day. With regard to service alterations and cancellations, the bus blueprint meetings allow for discussions on this. Mr Cooper also highlighted that Hedingham and Chambers would be launching an e-mail newsletter in the near future to inform local residents about any changes to services. Mr Cooper also highlighted that a draft timetable for Route 87, Colchester to Brighlingsea, was recently published on their website inviting public comment. As a result of comments received the timetable was revised twice.

Services in the Borough of Colchester

In response to a question regarding the issues at the High Street and Bus Station. Chris Seaman, Essex County Council, highlighted that Colchester is fortunate to have a high number and frequency of bus services, however due to limited amount

of curb space, this can cause overcrowding at the bus stops. Mr Seaman also highlighted that due to new developments taking place around Colchester, it is likely that the number of bus services will increase. This will put further pressure on existing bus stops, and the Town Centre may struggle to accommodate that. Mr Seaman stated that discussions are underway with the Borough Council to establish what opportunities there are for additional picking up and setting down facilities, however it is too early to confirm whether there are any suitable locations that could be used.

Mr Cooper, Go-Ahead, highlighted that other areas in East Anglia have grouped the services in terms of destinations. Mr Cooper suggested that bus operators could discuss the distribution of buses in the Town Centre at future bus blueprint meetings.

With regard to rural services, Tracy Rudling, Community360 highlighted that the charity provides a high number of services in rural areas. Community transport provided by Community360 will also be launching in the Tiptree area in the near future, providing a public transport service for that area. Tracy Rudling stated that the charity currently has 35 volunteer drivers from across the Borough strategically placed across the rural areas, which helps to keep the amount of dead miles down.

In response to a question about how commissioning of supported services is undertaken by Essex County Council, Deborah Fox confirmed that commercial withdrawals are tracked and equality impact assessments conducted. Where it is feasible services are supported by Essex County Council funding. When commercial services are withdrawn, officers review whether the service could be re-routed, or altered to ensure it continues. There is also the possibility that community transport providers, such as Community360 or Essex County Council's CommunityLink would be able to provide certain services. Ms Fox stated that paying patronage on buses ensures that services keep running and that there are times when services cannot be supported. Deborah Fox highlighted that further information on this could be provided at the next stages of the Bus Review.

Councillor Davies highlighted that she would be keen to find out more information about the Bus Blueprint.

Closing Comments

Deborah Fox, Essex County Council

Deborah Fox provided further information about fares for Park and Ride following on from queries raised during the meeting. Feedback from customers suggested that a family fare should be introduced, and this has now been rolled out with two adults and three children costing £5. In addition, further offers have been made to local businesses buying a volume ticket from Essex County Council. This has been

successful with Colchester General Hospital who have passed on a further subsidy to their staff. This then frees up spaces at the hospital for less able residents. Further work will continue with business to help to grow the Park and Ride service. Deborah Fox also highlighted that the Park and Ride service has a dedicated bus lane into the centre of Colchester.

First Buses

Steve Wickers, First Buses, thanked the Scrutiny Panel for the invitation to the meeting and for the comments and feedback provided, which shows that people are passionate about buses and see the value and the role they play. Mr Wickers highlighted that buses are very reactive to demand and that there needs to be a plan between partners to future proof for the growth of Colchester.

Simon Davies provided the Panel with information regarding the business model used in London, as Panel members had raised queries relating the bus provision in London. Simon Davies stated that instead of bus operators needing to be commercially viable, they are paid a flat fee per mile for operating a service. Revenue from public transport provision is collected by Transport for London and then provided to bus operators. This allows for evening services, which would not be commercially viable outside of London, to operate. Outside of London it is necessary to incentivise people to use buses alongside a deterrent. Mr Davies highlighted the cost of parking in London and the difficult in finding car parking spaces which acts as a deterrent.

Mr Davies also wanted to highlight that First Essex have worked with, and want to continue to work with community groups and estates to develop solutions and build and grow the network.

Jeremy Cooper, Go-Ahead

Jeremy Cooper thanked the Panel for the opportunity to discuss bus services in Colchester. Jeremy Cooper raised the issue of family fares which was raised in Have Your Say and highlighted that the industry does get this wrong at Off-peak time. Mr Cooper highlighted that a new discount would be on offer for the Sudbury service.

The issue of school travel was also raised during Have Your Say, and Jeremy Cooper commented that he would be happy to have a conversation about this after the meeting. Mr Cooper explained that in some cases school transport can provide the support required to ensure a rural bus route continues, due to children and young people paying the fares.

Anthony Comber, Arriva

Antony Comber stated that they are keen to work in partnership with the Council and businesses as there is a common problem that can be tackled together. Mr Comber highlighted that there are certain Business Improvement District areas that increase the levy to fund alternative transport measures. Other options could include using funds from car parking to invest into other forms of transport, such as a bike scheme. Removing people from cars into other modes of transport.

Mr Comber highlighted that there is a younger generation that do not have or want a car, and therefore public transport is attractive to them. With more environmentally friendly technology being developed this is becoming a potential areas of growth for bus services. Buses are one of the biggest alternative options for public transport, Mr Comber highlighted that a double decker bus can remove 75 cars from the road, if the bus was given priority on the roads passenger satisfaction in bus services would be even higher.

Mr Comber finished by highlighting that Councils, Local business and bus operators can work together to deliver services that reflect the needs of the community.

Scrutiny Panel

The Panel expressed their thanks to those who had attended the meeting and responded to queries raised. Councillor Davies explained that the next steps for the bus review would be discussed at the beginning of the next municipal year. Councillor Davies also thanked members of the public for taking their time to attend the meeting and have their say. Councillor Davies suggested that if anyone in attendance had any further comments that they should feed them in through their local councillors or direct to the Borough Council.

RESOLVED that;

- a) The Scrutiny Panel expressed their thanks for those who took their time to attend the meeting and respond to questions.
- b) the next steps of the Bus Review be established at the beginning of the next municipal year.

Scrutiny Panel Bus Review

1. Summary of feedback and information from participating companies and organisations

General feedback

- Town is congested, making bus operations more challenging (Arriva, Panther, Heddingham & First Bus)
- Car parking charges in town centre are too low and prevent modal shift from car to bus (Arriva, Panther & First Bus).
- Community transport schemes benefit from using bus lanes but use of stops is sometimes questioned (when being used for a not-for-profit service run for a community/public use) (Community360 (C360)).
- Community groups operating under Section 19 Permits (transport of members but not the public) also provide support and signposting for service users) (C360).
- Essex County Council (ECC) are investing in local buses, Park and Ride and Community 360. ECC has recorded slight increases for bus use in Colchester and believe competition between operators has kept fares down (ECC).
- Fares and multi-operator season tickets are good value (First Bus).
- Colchester Blueprint meetings are positive and useful (several operators and ECC)
- 40% fewer teenagers have driving licenses, compared to the figures for 1997.

Work underway to improve punctuality

- Arriva: Building live surveillance centres to manage services. All buses have GPS & radios. Trialling of new working method in Southend led to punctuality almost reaching 95%.
- ECC: Reducing congestion by increasing bus use. Bus lanes introduced and A12 junction 28 improved.
- First Bus: Use of AVLS (automatic vehicle location system). Data used to refine future service changes. Feedback from public tracked to improve quality.
- Heddingham: They use satellite tracking and messaging to and from vehicles. Twitter is used to flag issues and a customer line is operated. It would help operators to have ways to work with ECC to manage the impact of road works and recommend a Punctuality Improvement Partnership is developed between ECC and operators.
- Ipswich Buses: Have increased frequency on their route but priority bus lanes on the Ipswich Road route would help.

Current efforts to increase bus usage in Colchester

- Arriva: Looking to engage more with local business community. Lack of ECC funding however leaves a significant risk for operators, with a currently declining market.
- ECC: Held promotional campaign for Park & Ride in early 2018. Promoting use of Colchester Borough Card multi-operator season ticket.
- First Bus: Now using digital platforms, mobile and contactless payment ticketing for buying tickets. This removes barriers. Bus tracking app introduced, and larger buses on busier routes.
- Hedingham: An increase in frequency and timeliness of services can be used as a driver to increase use of buses. Plans include improved marketing/presentation of the fleet and better wi-fi in vehicles.
- Ipswich Buses: A new network is in operation with revised fares, contactless and app payment, along with a new website. Marketing is to be improved.

Work ongoing to reduce emissions

- Arriva: Won £1m from ECC to convert Colchester fleet to the Euro 6 emissions standard.
- Community 360: Have replaced several older, less efficient buses
- ECC Sustainable Travel Planning Team works with firms to implement travel plans. £500k government funding secured to convert 30 Colchester buses to Euro 6 standard.
- First Bus: Introduction of Euro 6 standard buses and upgrading of vehicles already in service. Green road system fitted to improve driving style and cut idling.
- Hedingham: Want to upgrade fleet to Euro 5 standard, but this would be dependent on the awarding of contracts on more than just competitive pricing. Euro 6 standard is commercially sustainable for new additions to the fleet.
- Ipswich Buses: Improving fleet to Euro 5 standard
- Panther: Fleet in Colchester area is 'Low emission zone' compliant

Moves to increase Accessibility

- Arriva: Use of 'ArrivaClick' flexible minibus service.
- Community 360: Most buses are fully accessible. Gradually replacing older models with new ones which include tail lifts. More capital funding support is needed for this.
- ECC: Over 100 smaller infrastructure issues dealt with, but topography and design of town cause difficulties which are difficult to mitigate.
- First Bus: All vehicles now DDA compliant and drivers are trained to consider access issues as part of their CPC course. Improvements to town bus stops would help give access where customers need it.

- Heddingham: Raised concern bus stops present issues e.g. buses not being able to always pull up flush with the kerb, through design of the kerb or illegal parking. Bus station area is poorly laid out (also mentioned by Panther) and improvements for stops should be discussed at Colchester Blueprint meetings.

Ways to achieve improved dialogue with bus companies:

- CBC need to meet bus company representatives individually in private to discuss issues, as commercial sensitivities often apply (Arriva).
- Have a regular meeting for bus users, CBC representatives and bus company representatives to discuss issues and requests (Arriva, Panther and Community 360).
- Make sure that community transport scheme operators are included in meetings on public transport (Community 360)
- Continuation of ECC's 'Colchester Blueprint Programme' (engagement between ECC, CBC and bus operator representatives). Meetings for resident representatives to meet bus operators will continue (ECC and First Bus).
- Voluntary Quality Bus Partnerships can be effective, and it would be useful to engage with key stakeholders (e.g. the BID) to feed into bus operations.
- Regular email newsletters and consultation with operators (Panther).

Date 21/1/2019
Our Ref: PT/CKS
Your Ref:

Essex County Council
Strategy and Transformation
Integrated Passenger Transport Unit
County Hall
CHELMSFORD
Essex CM1 1QH

Dear Cllr Davies,

Re: CBC – Bus Scrutiny Panel Letter – 27th November 2018

Thank you for your letter of 27th November, in which you ask for responses on several areas of bus operation within the town, following the Colchester Borough Council Scrutiny Panel Bus Review meeting of 16th April 2018.

I have used your initial letter as a framework by which to respond, which I hope will make it easier for the panel to correlate responses to the specific questions raised. The headings and bullet points below are therefore from your original narrative, ECC's comments are added italicised afterwards.

To understand the strategic role and benefits of bus operations and how buses can best serve the Community.

- **With regard to the Bus Blueprint, what are the current goals, deadlines and long-term targets for the group?**
 - *The Colchester Bus Blueprint has a number of headline themes, which collectively cover most aspects of the bus business and operational environment. Specific theme areas comprise; Vision, ticketing, business engagement, current services, new developments, car parking provision & pricing, marketing of bus travel, town centre bus hub infrastructure and route / stop infrastructure.*
 - *The group has already worked collaboratively on a number of projects including;*
 - *participation in the 2017 Catch The Bus Week campaign,*
 - *development of a quality bus partnership on bus route 88 (Colchester to Halstead {Great Yeldham}),*
 - *introduction of a much improved range of multi-operator ticketing products based on the Colchester Borough Card,*
 - *the review and implementation of town centre bus stopping arrangements,*
 - *involvement with Colchester Business Community's 'Our Colchester' process,*

- *working with other service providers such as Colchester General Hospital and several higher educational establishments on bus related activities.*
- *The next major activity that the group is looking to work towards is the development of a more comprehensive partnership arrangement between the bus operators and both the Borough and County Councils, with the aim of improving the quality, reliability and environment for bus services across the town. Work will start on this during 2019.*
- *We also hope to introduce a series of passenger infrastructure upgrades, to complement the initial review of town centre bus stopping arrangements undertaken in 2018 – however this will be partially dependant on Colchester’s proposals for town centre pedestrianisation.*
- **What discussions have taken place to link services and those provided by Community360?**
 - *There are no formal plans to link main stream bus services with those provided by Community 360.*
 - *Community Transport is a very important element of the overall transport service mix for Colchester. However, they do have different client bases. Conventional bus services deal with the mass transit of large numbers of people along fixed routes across the borough for local journeys and inter-urban corridors. In contrast the services of Community 360 offers bespoke travel to provide accessibility for residents unable to use conventional bus services. As a result they tend to offer bespoke door to door services, which are not easily combined with bus routes.*
 - *In principal it might be possible for an organisation like community 360 to take on some of the more lightly used local bus services, making use of the Section 22 permits that allow not for profit organisations to carry the general public. To have a significant effect this would require a significant change to the way community transport services are run. There are also serious licensing issues, following a change of view by the DfT in July 2017 over what constitutes a ‘not for profit’ operation and which is currently the subject of ongoing legal dispute at a national level. Until this situation is resolved it will be difficult to extend community transport functions beyond their current scope.*
- **What steps are being taken to encourage new bus users when new housing developments are built?**
 - *Wherever appropriate the ECC Strategic Development Engineers seek to secure the infrastructure to enable development to be served by passenger transport. For larger sites, this normally means ensuring the site spine road is adequately dimensioned both in terms of its width as well as horizontal and vertical alignment. ECC also tries to secure*

improvements to existing bus stops as well as new stops, the latter generally being on larger sites.

- ECC can also encourage the developer to approach the local bus service operator(s) to procure an improvement(s) to an existing service(s) or a new service.*
- The County Council's Sustainable Travel Planning Team (STPT) may also recommend the inclusion of Travel Planning conditions which require developers to provide a Residential Travel Information Pack to the occupants of each dwelling built as part of new residential sites across Essex. A Residential Travel Information Pack should be a promotional brochure which endorses and encourages the use of local bus services and all other sustainable modes. In addition to the packs, developers are also usually required to provide sample bus tickets. The STPT works closely with developers and local bus operators to secure tickets and/or vouchers for relevant services.*
- For larger developments (250 dwellings and above) the STPT recommend the inclusion of a full Residential Travel Plan in addition to Travel Information Packs. A Travel Plan will include the appointment of a Travel Plan Coordinator (TPC), who's job it is to engage with residents and offer information, support and guidance around local public transport services and other sustainable modes. Another duty of the TPC is to offer and conduct Personalised Travel Planning which will help identify routes and journey plans, including bus services.*
- As part of both the Travel Plan and Travel Information Packs residents are signposted to www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk and other online resources. We also work with the bus operators to provide hardcopy timetable information, particularly for new bus services.*
- What is your view on the consultation regarding the Bus Services Act 2017: accessible information and Bus Services Act 2017: bus open data?**

In order to aid understanding, please find below some initial scene setting followed by ECC's current thoughts on the above;

- What is 'open data'?*
 - The DfT's Open Data ambition is to have a system that creates clear roles/responsibilities for the provision of data by bus operators for local transport authorities and data aggregators. This means: (1) introducing standards for accurate bus data, supporting operators to choose digital processes over analogue and (2) makes it easier for passengers to make informed travel decisions.*

- *What does it enable to be done differently from now?*
 - *The DfT's initial intention in their Summer 2018 consultation was to have Operators referencing their data to a DfT portal*, facilitating access to the below information:*
 - *Route and timetable information by end of 2019.*
 - *Basic fare and ticket information by end of 2020.*
 - *Real time information by end of 2020.*
 - *Complex fare and ticket information by end of 2022.*
- *As opposed to a centralised model, the DfT has proposed a distributed model for data. This means that the publication of data is at source (i.e. by the operators), helping to protect the provenance and integrity of the data. ECC's interpretation, is that the DfT portal will be an index of URLs that would point the user to the Operator's hosted file. Although this has yet to be made clear: more information is expected 'sometime' in January 2019.*
- *Does ECC think it's a good idea or not?*
 - *Broadly ECC supports the proposals for operators taking a more proactive role in making key data available to the public. However, the relatively short timescales proposed by DfT are of concern and the ability to supply accurate and up to date fares data across the whole range of service operations, which can be very complex, is also a matter of concern.*
- *How will it benefit users?*
 - *Making more and better data related to timetables, fare and reliability open to the public should help to encourage people to try using the bus and help improve their profile. In Essex both the operator and the council are usually prompt with current data submissions (timetables) and on the whole offers an accurate dataset, but elsewhere around the Country LAs have not been as diligent. It is likely therefore that 'visible' benefits will be more noticeable elsewhere.*
- *What are the main risks?*
 - *There are a number of risks associated with such activities, including, but not limited to;*
 - *Operators may not see the benefit and therefore not actively participate.*
 - *There's a concern from ECC, that data will no longer be checked/validated by an external body and instead simply be left on a portal for people to use.*
 - *Lack of clear data standards and guidance to support Operators - especially those who have no dedicated 'data staff'.*
 - *A further risk is that data will not be provided with enough lead time for other functions to be undertaken timely e.g. roadside, publicity, public engagement etc.*
 - *Real time information is another area of concern, for whilst operators will be obliged to provide Advanced Vehicle*

Location (AVL) data to the Local Authorities, there's a cost to do this on both sides and this could actually be complex to facilitate if the DfT do not provide clear guidance (as different systems will be procured by the Operators, increasing the workload for ECC immensely).

- *Fares. From our view, this is one of the weakest areas of the consultation - the amount of fares and the complexity of them means we need a robust data standard. A European standard (NETEX) has been mooted but only a handful of UK 'experts' are sufficiently knowledgeable in it. So in ECC's view, it is risky to be placing tight deadlines (by 2020) on Operators to get themselves mobilised for this.*
- *What is ECC doing to help/assist/promote with the operators/public?*
 - *We are currently awaiting the follow up report (Jan 2019) before formally reaching out to Operators to plan the way forward in more detail.*
- **What is the assessment criteria for supported services?**
 - *As the Local Authority, we are generally the transport provider of last resort, with regard to the provision of services that commercial operators are unwilling or unable to provide within their current business model. There are steps within the ECC policy, which outlines the circumstances under which ECC might step in to provide bus services and the levels of prioritisation that may be afforded to various types of service, within ECC's limited bus service budget.*
 - *This information is provided more fully within the ECC Local Bus Policy 2015 please click on the link below;*
<https://www.essexhighways.org/uploads/files/local%20bus%20service%20priority%20policy%202015%20to%202020.pdf> .

Punctuality of Services

- **What technology would assist the transit of buses in central Colchester?**
 - *Technology (such as 'green wave' systems for traffic lights or AVL allowing buses to be tracked and service to be actively managed) can assist the movement of buses through urban centres. However, the underlying issues for bus traffic in Colchester, in common with other mature urban landscapes, is the need to establish effective modal priority within the road network. This would facilitate faster and more reliable bus journey times, making them more attractive to potential service users. The potential for passenger growth would be likely to encourage investment in bus service frequency and quality, creating a virtuous circle. A reallocation of road space and prioritisation at key junctions is achievable from a technical perspective, however some difficult decisions with regard to highway priorities is the real key to*

unlocking the benefits of sustainable modes including buses throughout the Borough. The issue is therefore volumetric rather than technical in nature.

- **At the meeting, it was mentioned that grouping of services for destination in the High Street may assist with congestion and new services, are there plans to introduce this?**
 - *The first stage of bus service reallocations within the town centre quadrant as a whole was introduced on 21st October 2018. This saw ECC/CBC/Essex Highways and the bus operators work together to introduce a revised suite of bus stopping arrangements. This has led to a reduction in the number of services calling at previously over-used stops and reallocations at other stops designed to provide more evenly spaced headways between services calling at individual stops around the town.*

Increasing Bus Usage

- **What is Essex County Council doing to challenge the current perception of bus travel?**
 - *If this question is referring to the age of the vehicles and likelihood of increased services, this is an element which rests largely with the parent groups of the largely national bus operators which operate in Colchester. The level of investment that they are likely to secure from their groups will be highly dependent however on the perceived return on investment that is likely to be secured. So if the subsidiary companies are able to demonstrate that there are well founded partnerships in place with the local planning and transport authorities, approval for investments in new and/or additional vehicles for example may be more easily secured. Conversely if a particular town is seen as somewhere that is unsupportive of its bus network and/or it fails to make it an operationally sound place to function, then additional funding will be difficult for them to secure and could in times of economic difficulty make the town a prime target for service retrenchment or even withdrawal.*
 - *Through the Bus Blueprint we have secured agreement on and introduced (in July 2018) a wider range of multi operator ticketing options, designed to attract new users to the bus network in Colchester and to provide greater value for money for some existing users.*
 - *ECC has worked with a range of parties to introduce various highway improvements across the Borough, which seek to make the operating environment for buses easier within the town centre and beyond. There will however need to be political support for larger measures to bring more meaningful benefits for the buses operating throughout the Borough.*

- *We have lead on a successful bid, along with CBC to secure funding for the retrofitting of a number of vehicles with enhancements to reduce the level of emissions that these vehicles emit into the environment, which is recognised as being a positive step towards addressing the AQMAs that are present within the town.*
- *Allied to the above point, the reallocation of services to stops around the town centre will also have contributed towards a reduction in the part which buses could have been seen as playing in contributing to town centre congestion – the freer flowing vehicular movements will have a consequential impact on air quality also.*
- *The Bus Blueprint Group and the bus operators themselves also work with and through the Colchester Travel Plan Club in extolling the virtues of sustainable travel and promoting ticketing offers to employees of travel plan club member organisations.*
- *ECC is piloting some activities with younger persons in order to understand the perceptions that this age group has of passenger transport and seeking to understand / address the hurdles that are presented by the individuals themselves and information gleaned from psychometric studies that have been undertaken. It is anticipated that the learning from these activities will enable us to reconsider how passenger transport promotional activities are undertaken in the future.*
- *ECC would also be very interested to understand how CBC proposes to promote the use of sustainable modes and challenge/redress negative perceptions within its areas of influence.*
- **What family fares are in place on supported services, and what else is Essex County Council doing to encourage families to use buses?**
 - *ECC has a county wide Family Sunday Saver ticket and the recent uplift to the Boroughcard range of products brought in through the Colchester Bus Blueprint also has a daily family ticket for either inner zone only or for the whole of the Boroughcard area.*
 - *ECC is working with operators, on the aspiration for introducing an Essex Saver Family Ticket – hopefully within 2019.*
 - *ECC also introduced a Park & Ride Family Ticket in 2018.*
 - *The marketing sub group of the Bus Board will also be working on a range of activities designed to encourage additional usage of the bus network, by both new and existing passengers and their families / friends.*
- **What is the current uptake in terms of businesses for the Colchester Park and Ride service, and what are the targets for the service?**

- *We currently work with 2 large companies and a few smaller ones, the uptake is quite slow but its early days. We are constantly making contact and showcasing our offers to prospective employers.*
- **What are the obstacles for introducing multi-operator travel cards?**
 - *In simplistic terms, the normal major obstacle to be overcome when seeking to introduce a new range of ticketing products is that of revenue apportionment – providing a mechanism that satisfies the operators that they are getting their reasonable share of revenue collected through the sale of these products viz a vis the amount of travel benefit enjoyed by the users of their services.*
 - *In reality Colchester residents are able to enjoy the benefits of a number of multi-operator and indeed multi-modal ticketing products.*
 - *Essex Saver tickets allow unlimited travel throughout the County on all but a few selected ‘special’ services.*
 - *Essex Sunday Saver tickets are a cheaper version of the above, affording travel on Sundays only.*
 - *There are a range of Boroughcard Tickets, with adult and child tickets available for various time periods from one day to a year – there is also a family ticket and the product range is available for both the ‘inner’ area (broadly the main built up area of Colchester) and the ‘outer’ area which additionally includes a range of outlying villages and towns, some of which are beyond the Borough boundaries. The scheme covers the main 3 operators in Colchester as well as being available on ECC contracted bus services (click on the link for further information). <https://www.firstgroup.com/essex/tickets/ticket-types/colchester-borough-card> The Boroughcard scheme is administered by First Essex Buses on behalf of all participating operators. First are currently planning a refresh of the Boroughcard marketing materials and developing a publicity campaign to promote its awareness.*
 - *There is also the plus bus ticket, which can be added to rail tickets for a variety of time periods – this is added on to the passenger’s rail ticket at the time of purchase and can be used by local residents in order to access the rail station at the start of their journey – equally it applies to visitors / commuters to the town who would use the ticket to facilitate access from the rail station to their final destination within a defined zone.*
 - *Within the Colchester Blueprint we have also secured inter-availability of tickets for passengers using the dual operator Quality Bus Partnership Route (Service 88).*

Reducing Emissions

- **Could you confirm what proportion of the buses operating in the Borough of Colchester at Euro6 standard?**
 - *Approximately 35% of the vehicles operated by the main 2 operators in the town will be either Euro VI or operating to Euro VI standard (through the fitment of retrofit kits) in the near future. More precise information in this regard should be sourced from the operators themselves.*
 - *The retrofit kits referred to above are as a consequence of 2 successful funding bid applications for Central Government monies, made under the umbrella of the Colchester Bus Blueprint, bringing together a partnership working between ECC, CBC, First Essex Buses and Arriva Southern Counties.*
- **Do you have plans to assist the introduction or trial electric buses in the Borough?**
 - *At present there are no plans to introduce electric buses into Colchester. That said it is known that the parent groups of some of our operators do have such trials elsewhere and may have plans for rolling out these technologies over time. Information on specific operator plans should be sought from them directly.*

Communicate with passengers when services are cancelled or altered

- **Could you outline the latest developments in technology, which would improve information for members of the public?**
 - *The major bus operators in the town enable passengers to track the progress of their bus by means of 'apps' downloaded onto mobile phones and tablets. Some of these are operator specific, whilst others carry information for all operators.*
 - *The bus operators have asked ECC through the Bus Blueprint group to facilitate their access to the Real Time Passenger Information Screens, present at many bus stops, for reporting last minute cancellations to services.*

Improving dialogue between bus companies and Colchester Borough Council, Councillors and members of the public

- **What consultations do you conduct with members of the public regarding removal of services, or introduction of new services?**
 - *ECC always consult on changes to their contracted services, such consultations are widely publicised.*
 - *The majority of the network (circa 85%) is however operated commercially by the various bus companies. They will have a range of mechanisms for interacting with the travelling public over changes to their services – ECC has no jurisdiction over how, when and with whom*

such activities are undertaken. Information should be obtained directly from the respective operators.

- **Is there a named contact available for Councillors, when information on bus services in a locality is required?**
 - *The Councillors should in the first instance check on Traveline, all changes that have been applied to the Traffic Commissioner for approval, will normally appear here in advance of the changes coming into effect.*
 - *Bus operator websites are also a useful place for Councillors to find out about operator consultations and impending service changes as well as potentially receiving other information such as those relating to service disruptions, diversions (eg due to roadworks) and new products.*
 - *ECC members are also able to make use of the Member Enquiry system.*
 - *Any issues that cannot be satisfactorily resolved through one or other of the above courses of action can be directed towards the Integrated Passenger Transport Unit mailbox Passenger.Transport@essex.gov.uk – the enquiry will be directed to an appropriate officer to generate a response.*

Yours sincerely



Helen Morris
Integrated Passenger Transport Unit
Essex County Council

Please reply to:	Passenger Transport
Telephone:	0345 743 0430
Email:	passenger.transport@essex.gov.uk
Internet:	www.essex.gov.uk

Response to supplementary Scrutiny Panel Questions to bus operators.

The following responses have been provided by Mr. Gavin Hunter, Arriva Area Manager for Hertfordshire and Essex.

To understand the strategic role and benefits of bus operations and how buses can best serve the Community.

- What discussions have taken place to link commercial services and those provided by Community360?

No discussions to date. The Colchester Blue Print Transport Forum meetings have not covered this as far as I know either, nor has the bus strategy board.

- What steps are being taken to encourage new bus users when new housing developments are built?

Communication with a couple of developers representatives have suggested very little funding is available to kick start new or extended routes. This has been raised at the Blue Print Transport meetings and at bus strategy board meetings and it would appear that during the planning process, s106 funding [particularly for bus provision] was poor or non-existent. This has been raised with Colchester Borough and Essex CC. My understanding is most of the planned developments in the area have already gone through the planning process without adequate or any funding for bus services. Where it is possible to include new developments with little or within existing resource, this has been or is being considered.

Arriva produce welcome packs for new residential areas promoting bus travel with discounted travel tickets [usually, with s106 contribution.] We are extremely keen to be involved as early as possible in the planning cycle, even if it is several years in advance, so that we can support and influence planning applications for future developments with day one subsidy which really cater for the travel needs of the new home owners.

- What is your view on the consultation regarding the Bus Services Act 2017: accessible information and Bus Services Act 2017: bus open data?

Arriva have been at the forefront of progressing open data; and have been fully involved in the consultation process with the DfT [Department for Transport].

Punctuality of Services

- What technology would assist the transit of buses in central Colchester?

Traffic light priority, bus lanes, key route pre-messaging for car drivers to use park and ride when town centre parking full, bus only routes using barriers recognising vehicles

- At the meeting, it was mentioned that grouping of services for destination in the High Street may assist with congestion and new services, are there plans to introduce this?

The High Street had revised stopping arrangements implemented on 21st October 2018 to ease congestion in the area partly caused by bunching at busy bus stops resulting in reduce traffic flows. I understand traffic flows in the area are better [but that's not to say they are good!]. There are no plans to revised the bus stop allocations at this point.

Increasing Bus Usage

- What is your company doing to challenge the current perception of bus travel?

Working with our partners at ECC, ECC secured funding from DfT to upgrade our vehicles [and First Group] to Euro 6 standard helping to improving air quality in and around the town centre. In partnership with Stansted we have introduced new vehicles on our route 133. We have a real-time app allowing customers with a smart phones to track their bus helping to give confidence when using our buses [particularly with so much major road improvements currently going on with the resulting delays]. This year, we introduced new ticket machines on our buses allowing contactless payments. Together with on-line/m-ticketing gives customers more convenience and flexibility about their ticketing and payment options. A lot of buses have free WiFi. Internal projects such as Community Fund to allow staff to bid for funding to support local community projects, clubs or charities, reconnecting local staff with the local communities.

- What family fares are in place in your network, and what else are you doing to encourage families to use buses?

Multi journey Family tickets are available for Arriva only Colchester wide day ticket. Additionally, the multi operator Colchester Borough Card day tickets are available for both zones. We have run summer campaigns in the past for families. We are looking at a similar campaign for summer 2019.

- Do you participate in Catch the Bus Week?

Yes, we historically offer £1 day tickets to new users to encourage trial of bus, also attending events to share information where appropriate, or attend bus surgeries with local authorities.

- What are the obstacles for introducing multi-operator travel cards?

We already have them in Colchester [see above]. Any card which undermines the commercial viability of existing tickets comes with no guarantee of a no better no worse outcome, far less a positive situation so the introduction of any card with a reduced price would need to be financially supported

Reducing Emissions

- Could you confirm what percentage of the buses that you operate in the Borough of Colchester are at Euro6 standard?

50% once retrofitting has been completed

- Do you have plans to introduce or trial electric buses in the Borough?

We have championed the need previously and have supported funding submissions across Essex for clean air initiatives including electric buses. However, we do not currently have any plans to introduce electric vehicles but would be happy to be part of a trial supported by CBC

Communicate with passengers when services are cancelled or altered

- Could you outline the latest developments in technology, which do or would improve information for members of the public?

Through the Colchester Blue Print Transport Forum, access to the bus stop real time information screens is being investigated to see if bus companies can update customer information when services are disrupted using fixed statements through pulldown menus to avoid misuse.

Social media is used to inform customers of any disruption currently, this is posted directly from our depot staff as any disruption occurs. We are currently looking into development of our app to push notifications direct to customers phones on the journeys they use, this is still in scope. Our website and app are being upgraded to improve information to customers in real time.

Improving dialogue between bus companies and Colchester Borough Council, Councillors and members of the public

- What consultation do you conduct with members of the public regarding removal of services, or introduction of new services?

When contracted service 11 changed enough to potentially cause an issue to customers, on bus notices and questionnaire together with on-line feedback page to the proposals was arranged through ECC. Bus user group engagement and the Colchester Blue Print Transport Forum is the main method. There is some contact with Colchester Institute and Essex University. For our own commercial services, we write out to the local community via a number of channels and request feedback on what changes we should make to our services. These suggestions are either implemented or not depending on their validity, and we make sure we feedback to those who have put the ideas forward and thank them for becoming involved.

- Is there a named contact available for Councillors, when information on bus services in a locality is required?

John Copping

16 July 2019

Report of	Assistant Director of Policy and Corporate	Author	Owen Howell
Title	Work Programme 2019-20		☎ 282518
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the current Work Programme 2019-2020 for the Scrutiny Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and note the contents of Work Programme for 2019-2020.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Panel's work programme will evolve as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting the opportunity is taken for the work programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances. The current work programme for 2019-20, is included at the end of the report.
- 3.2 At the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 11 June 2019, the Panel resolved to include a work item on 6 August for members to consider the work carried out by the North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance. This has now been scheduled.
- 3.3 The Forward Plan of Key Decisions is included as part of the work programme for the Scrutiny Panel, and this is included an **Appendix A**.

4. Standard References

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

5. Strategic Plan References

- 5.1 Governance is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing.
- 5.2 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self-governance

provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

Appendices

Appendix A – Forward Plan of Key Decisions – 1 July 2019 – 31 October 2019

Work Programme for 2019/20

Scrutiny Panel meeting - 11 June 2019
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 6 June 2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. North Essex Garden Communities 2. Financial Monitoring Report End of Year – 2018/19 3. Capital Expenditure Monitor 2018/19 4. Year End 2018/19 Performance Report including the Strategic Plan Action Plan 2018-21 5. Work Programme 2019-20
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 16 July 2019
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 11 July 2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2020/21 Budget Strategy, Medium Term Financial Forecast and Budget Timetable 2. Treasury Management – Annual Report 3. Annual Scrutiny Report 4. Bus Review: Further Actions. 5. Work Programme 2019-20
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 6 August 2019
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 1 August 2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of Colchester Borough Homes Performance 2018/19 2. North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance 3. Work Programme 2019-20
Scrutiny Panel (Crime and Disorder Committee) - 12 September 2019
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 5 September 2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee) 2. Work Programme 2019-20
Scrutiny Panel – 15 October 2019
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Briefing – 10 October 2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local Council Tax Support – Year 2020/21 (Provisional) 2. Business Rate retention and future arrangements. 3. Work Programme 2019-20

Scrutiny Panel meeting - 12 November 2019
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 7 November 2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2019-20 Revenue Monitor, period April – September 2. 2019-20 Capital Monitor, period April – September 3. Work Programme 2019-20
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 10 December 2019
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 4 December 2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Half Year 2019 - 2020 Performance Report including progress on Strategic Plan Action Plan 2. Work Programme 2019-20
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 28 January 2020
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 23 January 2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2020-21 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, Medium Term Financial Forecast, Housing Revenue Accounts Estimate and Housing Investment Programme (Pre-scrutiny of Cabinet Decision) 2. Treasury Management Investment Strategy 3. Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2020-21 4. Work Programme 2019-20
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 17 March 2020
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 12 March 2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS 1 August 2019 – 31 December 2019

During the period from 1 August 2019 – 31 December 2019* Colchester Borough Council intends to take 'Key Decisions' on the issues set out in the following pages. Key Decisions relate to those executive decisions which are likely to either:

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

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

The Council invites members of the public to attend any of the meetings at which these decisions will be discussed and the documents listed on the Plan and any other documents relevant to each decision which may be submitted to the decision taker can be viewed free of charge although there will be a postage and photocopying charge for any copies made. *All decisions will be available for inspection at the Library and Community Hub, Colchester Central Library, 21 Trinity Square, Colchester and they are also published on the Council's website, www.colchester.gov.uk*

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

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

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

If you need help with reading or understanding this document please take it to the Library and Community Hub, Colchester Central Library, 21 Trinity Square, Colchester or telephone (01206) 282222 or textphone users dial 18001 followed by the full number that you wish to call and we will try to provide a reading service, translation or other formats you may need.

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

KEY DECISION REQUIRED	DOES DECISION INCLUDE EXEMPT INFORMATION (or information defined by the Government as Confidential)	DATE OF DECISION or PERIOD TO BE TAKEN	DECISION MAKER (title and name, including Cabinet, portfolio holders and officers)	DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED OR TO BE SUBMITTED TO DECISION TAKER TO CONSIDER (and from where they are available)	CONTACT DETAILS FROM WHICH DOCUMENTS CAN BE OBTAINED (name of the authors of the reports)
Update on New Affordable Housing Projects	No	10 July 2019	Cabinet (Cllrs Cory, J Young, Fox, Goss, Higgins, King, Lilley and G Oxford) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet report	Andrew Tyrrell Client and Business Services Manager 01206 282390 Andrew.tyrrell@colchester.gov.uk
Award of Contract – award of the Housing ICT Contract under delegated authority from Cabinet	No	September 2019	Portfolio Holder for Housing Councillor Adam Fox. Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Geoff Beales Client Services Manager 01206 506514 geoff.beales@colchester.gov.uk

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Appointment of Supplier(s) for the provision of fleet vehicles and/or maintenance.	Yes	September 2019	Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation, Councillor Martin Goss Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Chris Dowsing Group Manager - Recycling, Waste and Fleet Colchester Borough Council Tel: 01206 282752 Email: chris.dowsing@colchester.gov.uk
North Essex Garden Communities Ltd Business Plan – Approval of 19/20 – 21/22 business plan for North Essex Garden Communities Limited	No	4 September 2019	Cabinet (Cllrs Cory, J Young, Fox, Goss, Higgins, King, Lilley and G Oxford) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet Report	Andrew Weavers Strategic Governance Manager & Monitoring Officer Andrew.weavers@colchester.gov.uk 01206 282213

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Housing Revenue Account Fees and Charges 2019-2020 To agree the Housing Revenue Account fees and charges for 2019-2020	No	October 2019	Portfolio Holder for Housing Councillor Adam Fox. Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Geoff Beales Client Services Manager 01206 506514 geoff.beales@colchester.gov.uk
Budget 2020-21 Update, Reserves and Balances and Approval of Fees and Charges	No	20 November 2019	Cabinet (Cllrs Cory, J Young, Fox, Goss, Higgins, King, Lilley and G Oxford) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet Report, Schedule of Fees and Charges	Paul Cook Finance Manager 01206 505861 Paul.cookx@colcehster.gov.uk

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