

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Assistant Director Policy and Corporate</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Richard Clifford</b> ☎ 507832
<b>Title</b>	<b>Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Work Programme 2019-20</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards		

**1. Executive Summary**

1.1 This report invites the Cabinet to consider a recommendation from the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel following its public engagement meeting on 25 September 2019.

**2. Recommended Decision**

2.1 That Cabinet consider the recommendation from the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel that the Panel examine potential options for providing or supporting the provision of a new lifelong learning centre in the Borough of Colchester.

**3. Reason for Recommended Decision**

3.1 The Policy and Public Initiatives Panel must seek approval from Cabinet on whether and how issues proactively identified by the Panel are examined.

**4. Alternative Options**

4.1 No alternative options are proposed.

## 5. Background Information

5.1 A key function of the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel is to provide a forum where members of the public can make suggestions about subjects that the Panel could examine as part of its work programme. At its meeting on 25 September, the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel held a public engagement session. This was built around an online survey with an opportunity for members of the public to attend the meeting and have their say and suggest ideas for the Panel to consider.

5.2 Twenty-two online submissions were received and presented to the Panel. In addition seven public speakers addressed the Panel. One of the proposals related to the creation of a Learning Shop. This would provide an information and signposting service for post school learning opportunities. The online submission in support of the proposal is attached at Appendix A. The proposal was also introduced to the at the meeting by Alan Skinner, and a note of his Have Your Say! contribution is below:-

*Mr Alan Skinner, trustee of the 'Learning Never Stops' adult learning charity, addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). He spoke in support of his survey response which had called for an adult learning centre to be provided and made available for use by all in the Borough. He detailed the long history of adult learning in Colchester and, whilst he believed that a new adult college would not be feasible, other options such as the setting up of a 'learning shop' were possible.*

*Mr Skinner informed the Panel that his charity's website had around 15,000 users who used it to source courses and learning providers. If a learning centre were to be set up in the town, it would be vital that this be advertised and promoted across a range of media, and by different organisations, including the Council.*

*The Panel discussed previous centres which had provided such facilities, such as the old learning centre and the old Greyfriars Adult Education Centre. Mr Skinner explained that the assets of the old Greyfriars centre had been transferred to the Wilson Marriage Centre which remained in operation. Unlike the locally-managed Greyfriars, the Wilson Marriage Centre was used to provide services and courses run and managed by Essex County Council.*

5.3 The Panel considered that this proposal warranted further consideration as part its work programme, and made the following recommendation to Cabinet:-

*RECOMMENDED to CABINET that approval be given for the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel to examine potential options for providing or supporting the provision of a new lifelong learning centre in the Borough of Colchester.*

5.4 The Panel also received a number of suggestions and proposals relating to town centre issues and determined that these should be considered further as part of its existing work item relating to options for Colchester High Street.

## 6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 The proposal would support the following Strategic Plan objectives:-

### **Growth**

Ensure residents benefit from Colchester's economic growth with skills, jobs and improving infrastructure

Wellbeing

Target support to the most disadvantaged residents and communities

### **Standard References**

7.1 At this stage, the proposal is that the suggestion be added to the Work Programme of the panel so at this stage there are no particular references to consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

**Responses received – Response 17.**

**To what does your specific idea relate?**

*Colchester's Strategic Plan*

**If your idea relates to the Strategic Plan, to which of its priorities does your idea mainly relate?**

*Wellbeing*

**What is your idea and what would you like the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel to review?**

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*A Learning Shop - providing an information and signposting service for post-school learning opportunities of all kinds. An unbiased person-centred helpdesk to suit the enquirer, not to fill courses.*

**Why do you think this is needed and what are the specific benefits of your proposal to the Borough of Colchester?**

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*Although there is still a wide range of lifelong learning on offer in the area it is not coherently presented and as a result is often inaccessible to those who most need it. Consequently the town loses opportunities.*

**What do you estimate this would cost?**

*£20,000 - £100,000*

**How long do you estimate this would take to roll out?**

*Months*

**Are there other areas where you have seen this idea already in place? If so, please provide further information below.**

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*Colchester! We once had one. The Borough was a major partner through its Economic Development dept. It was very successful and only ceased through the closure of the lynchpin partner, the adult college at Gr*

**We would like to invite you to the Policy and Public Initiatives meeting on the 25 September 2019, is this something you would be interested in attending?**

*Yes*