

Report of	Assistant Director of Policy and Corporate	Author	Matt Sterling ☎ 282577
Title	Strategic Plan 2018-21		
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report concerns the draft Strategic Plan 2018-21 (attached). The Strategic Plan sets the priorities for the borough and the Council for the next three years. The current Strategic Plan was published in February 2015 and runs to 2018 so a new plan is needed to reflect future needs.
- 1.2 The Strategic Plan is one of the core statutory elements of the Council's Policy framework, as set out in Article 4 of the Council's Constitution. It must therefore be adopted by full Council.
- 1.3 The Strategic Plan sets the framework for the Council's three-year Medium Term Financial Forecast and its Capital Programme. Both the Plan and the Budget will be debated at the same full Council on 21 February.
- 1.4 This new Strategic Plan addresses the key challenges facing the Borough by describing 20 priorities organised into four key themes: Growth, Responsibility, Opportunity and Wellbeing.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To agree the Strategic Plan 2018-21 and recommend to full Council that it be adopted.
- 2.2 To ask officers to prepare an action plan to achieve its aims and priorities.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To enable the Strategic Plan 2018-21 to be agreed and adopted.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The current Strategic Plan expires at the end of the financial year. A new plan is required and needs to be adopted by full Council. The absence of a Strategic Plan would create a significant risk of the Council failing to identify and deliver on its core priorities.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Council's Strategic Plan describes the organisation's view of the main priorities for the Borough. It covers a three-year time span, although many of the issues it addresses are long-term in nature. Once adopted, an accompanying detailed action plan is produced to ensure meaningful action is taken to address the Strategic Plan's priorities.
- 5.2 To produce this plan, workshops have been held with Cabinet members, Senior Managers, and Officers. The Council has also held a consultation with the public to inform the Plan's contents. This consultation took the form of an electronic survey open to all, and focus groups aimed at ensuring the voices of a representative cross-section of the borough's population were heard.
- 5.3 The Plan is organised into four themes which recognise the need:
- To ensure all residents benefit from the growth of the borough, and that jobs and infrastructure keep up with this growth
 - For everyone to take responsibility to do their bit to make the borough even better
 - To promote and improve Colchester and its environment
 - To make Colchester an even better place to live and to support those who need most help.
- 5.4 The four themes in this Plan are: Growth, Responsibility, Opportunity, and Wellbeing.
- 5.5 Each theme includes five priorities which address the key issues facing the borough. These priorities cover a wide range of issues including anti-social behaviour, business, communities, environment, heritage, housing, jobs, tourism, transport, and wellbeing. The Strategic Plan Action Plan will describe detailed actions for each priority.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan 2018-21 will continue to support the importance of equality and diversity in all aspects of borough life.
- 6.2 The Equality Act requires councils to have an equality objective, and the new Plan does that throughout its themes and priorities. An Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the website [here](#), or by following this pathway from the homepage – Your Council>How the Council works>Equality and Diversity>Equality Impact Assessments>Policy and Corporate>Strategic Plan 2018-21.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The themes and priorities of the Strategic Plan 2018-21 will be reflected in officer reports to councillors following its adoption by full Council in February.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The public consultation for the new Strategic Plan consisted of an electronic survey open to all residents and organisations, along with a set of focus groups to ensure that the voices of a representative cross-section of Colchester residents were heard. The six-week public consultation ran to 31 December 2017. It was promoted via a [Have your say on the Council's future priorities](#) news release and a 'banner' on the home page of the Council's website. Responses to the survey were invited online, via a dedicated phone line or by visiting Colchester Library and completing a paper form.

- 8.2 85 people responded to the electronic survey, which asked respondents to rank the three most important and the three least important services that we commission or provide, as well as to express their views.
- 8.3 Eight focus groups were held at four locations across the borough – two urban, two rural - involving 46 people chosen to be representative of residents in terms of age, disability, ethnicity, income, family status and gender. The focus groups gave a more in-depth opportunity to explore how residents feel about living in Colchester, and to gauge their responses to possible priorities.
- 8.4 In the public consultation, residents told us:
- Colchester is a welcoming place and should continue to be so.
 - They are positive about Colchester as a town and borough and see it a good place to live.
 - They are proud of the long and prominent history of the town.
 - They like the countryside surrounding Colchester, especially those with young children.
 - They like the borough's open spaces, particularly Castle Park and the events and activities that are held there.
 - They believe that being slightly further out of London helps Colchester maintain more of a rural image, yet still being connected to the heart of Essex and London.
 - They understand the importance of 'growth' for the town and borough, but want infrastructure to keep pace with Colchester's growth.
 - They want the Council to play its part to maximise the availability of affordable housing.
 - They want to maximise the availability of jobs and opportunities, especially younger people.
 - They want the Council to support the most vulnerable in society, and to help reduce homelessness.
 - They want the town centre to be more accessible and appealing, and recognise that the Council cannot work on its own in dealing with the town centre challenges.
 - They think the Council has an important role in facilitating healthier lives as part of the infrastructure improvements as the town grows.
 - They are concerned about anti-social behaviour, particularly those living in urban areas.
 - They are positive about the Council's recycling services.
- 8.5 Staff views were sought at a workshop and these were incorporated into the Plan.
- 8.6 The consultation and research responses were fed into the review of the Strategic Plan.

9. Publicity Considerations

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

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 The Strategic Plan sets the framework for the Council's three-year Medium Term Financial Forecast and its Capital Programme. A key part of this is setting out the Council's priorities for the next three years and looking at how this will affect where the budget is spent.
- 10.2 The financial implications of the action plan to deliver the Strategic Plan's priorities are incorporated into the annual budgeting process.

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Community Safety remains a priority in this Strategic Plan. Its specific priorities to address issues around community safety, crime and disorder include:
- help make sure Colchester is a welcoming place for all residents and visitors
 - educate residents about the impact of anti-social behaviour
 - work with Essex Police and partners in the Safer Colchester Partnership to make Colchester an even safer place.

12. Health and Safety Implications

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

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 As action plans to deliver the Strategic Plan 2018-21 are developed, risks will be identified and addressed.
- 13.2 The absence of a Strategic Plan would create a risk for the Council failing to deliver on its core priorities.

Appendices

The draft Strategic Plan 2018-21.

Background Papers

Summary of the public consultation.