

1 March 2023

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

## 1. Executive Summary

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

## **2. Action Required**

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

## **3. Background Information**

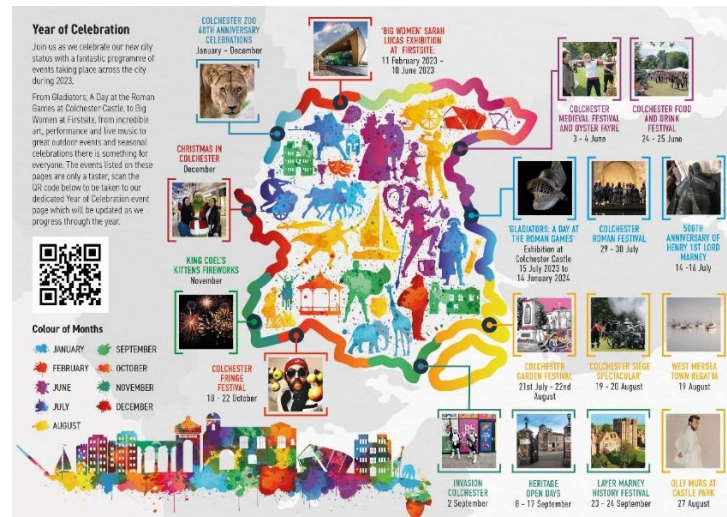
### **3.1 Year of Celebration**

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

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

#### **What's happening.**

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



## 3.2 The Longer-Term Approach

### Inclusive

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

### City Council Priorities

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

*Our city deserves the very best our Council can deliver.*

*Together with our partners we must respond to the challenges of our times whilst focussing on what matters most to the people of Colchester. To recognise the distinctive qualities of our rural and city life, our many communities and identities and our culture and heritage.*

*Our new Three-Year Plan continues to provide a framework, sense of direction and the key outcomes we will address, deliver, or influence in the coming years.*

*Central to all we do will be the discipline and professionalism we can apply, with our partners. To ensure in the most challenging times for our country, as well as our city, that our finances are managed well, that we do all we can with and through others. That our sense of optimism, and ambition show in all we do, to*

*make life better. As Councillors, officers and full Council, for all those that live, and work or visit the great City of Colchester.*

*The priorities are as follows:*

- Respond to the Climate Emergency
- Deliver Modern Services for a Modern City
- Improve Health, Well-being, and Happiness
- Deliver Homes for those most in Need
- Grow our Economy so Everyone Benefits
- Celebrate our City, Heritage and Culture

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Marketing Collaborative**

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

### **Objectives**

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

### **Outputs**

To understand what is needed to:

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

## **Focus on Young People**

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

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

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

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

### **Celebrate our Volunteers**

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

### **Engagement**

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

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

## **4. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

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

## **5. Financial implications**

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

## **6. Standard References**

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

## 7. Appendices

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

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