



Colchester
COMMERCIAL HOLDINGS



ANNUAL **REPORT**



2020-21





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FOREWORD



Welcome to the 2020/21 Annual Report

Like every other business across the UK, the Amphora Group has been faced with a year of unprecedented challenges in

2020/21, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The resilience in the trading performance is due to the diversity of our offer across the three dedicated businesses:

Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd (CATL)

Colchester Amphora Energy Ltd (CAEL)

Colchester Amphora Homes Ltd (CAHL)

This company structure provided good trading resilience for Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd (CCHL) and resulted in a pleasing trading surplus of £226,000.

This has enabled the anticipated dividend payment to Colchester Borough Council (CBC) of £226,000 which will be reinvested into council services for the benefit of the businesses and residents of Colchester.

We were delighted that Colchester Borough Council was named both 'Entrepreneurial Council of the Year' at the prestigious, annual LGC Awards 2020 and 'Best Commercial Council' at the annual Municipal Journal (MJ) Achievement Awards. These honours recognised the innovation, ambition and achievement shown by the Council and the Amphora group of commercial companies.

A major milestone of the year was the opening of Colchester's newest sporting facility, the Northern Gateway Sports Park. This £28.8 million development has been project managed from design through to delivery by CATL who will now manage the facility under CBC's Sport and Leisure services.

The state-of-the-art sport and leisure facility boasts a wealth of indoor and outdoor facilities including a closed-circuit mile long road track, a cycle pump track and learn to ride area, 3G pitches, grass rugby pitches and multi-use sports centre with gym and velo studio. It is now also home to craft coffee makers, Paddy & Scott's who in collaboration with CBC chose it as the venue for their first venture in Colchester.

Work has continued at pace on building Colchester's digital infrastructure. In one of the largest projects of its type undertaken by a local authority in the UK, more than 75km of new fibre optic network has been delivered across the town, in addition to new direct links to the UK's main internet exchange at Telehouse, London. Acting on behalf of CBC, Amphora has secured the largest ever direct foreign investment in Colchester, by the Swedish digital infrastructure specialist, VX Fiber which, via its fibre-deployment business LilaConnect, is now expanding the networks to reach thousands of residential and business premises across the region. The networks provide the basis for future investment in 5G, wireless and 'smart' city technologies, and are already helping to improve the Council's services to residents. The new networks have already facilitated the upgrade of Colchester's CCTV system to a fully modern, digital platform.

CAEL continues to explore innovative areas of business to combat climate change. Its flagship project to install a low carbon District Heat Network to residents, businesses and other commercial users at Colchester Northern Gateway progresses well, with the tender for its detailed design and construction issued.

CAHL has made excellent progress to support the Council's commitment to improving the quality and availability of homes for private sale and affordable rent. At Creffield Road in Lexden, the year saw construction completed on the redevelopment of a locally listed Victorian property into six one and two-bedroom apartments and the construction of two, new three-bedroom family houses.

Construction also began on the building of eight new family houses and apartments in Military Road, Colchester and on various sites to transform underused garage premises. These projects will yield 100% affordable units for social housing and are all built to the Government's Future Homes 2025 principles.

There's plenty more in the pipeline, with outline planning approval drawings finalised this year for the delivery of 350 new homes at Colchester Northern Gateway – South.

This report is testimony to the hard work of all the staff of the CCHL group of companies who seek to develop the businesses and embrace future growth and development even in the toughest of trading climates.

The leisure and hospitality industry was badly impacted by Covid-19, and Colchester Events and Colchester Weddings were no exception. Although no events were able to go ahead, the team made huge strides in attracting major promoters, securing funding and building resilience for a post covid world.

Special mention must be made of the Helpline service which faced its second financial year operating within the Covid-19 restrictions. The team must be commended for continuing to deliver vital monitoring and response services to over 3,450 vulnerable people living independently in their own home – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week throughout the pandemic.

Finally, I'd like to thank the CCHL board members for their continued support, advice and encouragement. It has been a privilege to be the Group Commercial Director of CCHL during this third year of operations. I am encouraged and excited to see our achievements to date and look forward to embarking on our next year of operations and opportunity.

Paul T Smith

Board Director and Group Commercial Director
Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd



WHO WE ARE

Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd (CCHL) is the holding company for three separate subsidiaries, with related but distinct products, services, markets and opportunities. We continue to consolidate our three trading entities into a high-quality commercial offer which maintains the strong public sector ethos of its shareholder.

Colchester Amphora Energy designs and implements low carbon energy systems and provides energy services in Colchester.

Colchester Amphora Trading (CATL) delivers high quality products and services to public and private sector clients in the property, leisure and health care industries.

Colchester Amphora Homes delivers high quality affordable and private homes for sale in Colchester and the surrounding area.

WE AIM TO

Generate profit to maintain viability, reduce risk, return a dividend to our shareholder and re-invest in our organisation

Provide our clients with high-quality products and services while maintaining a high level of return for the council

Capitalise on our range of unique products and services to gain market share

Operate in a commercial, innovative manner exploring options for development and expansion

Improve quality and availability of homes for private sale and affordable rent for local people

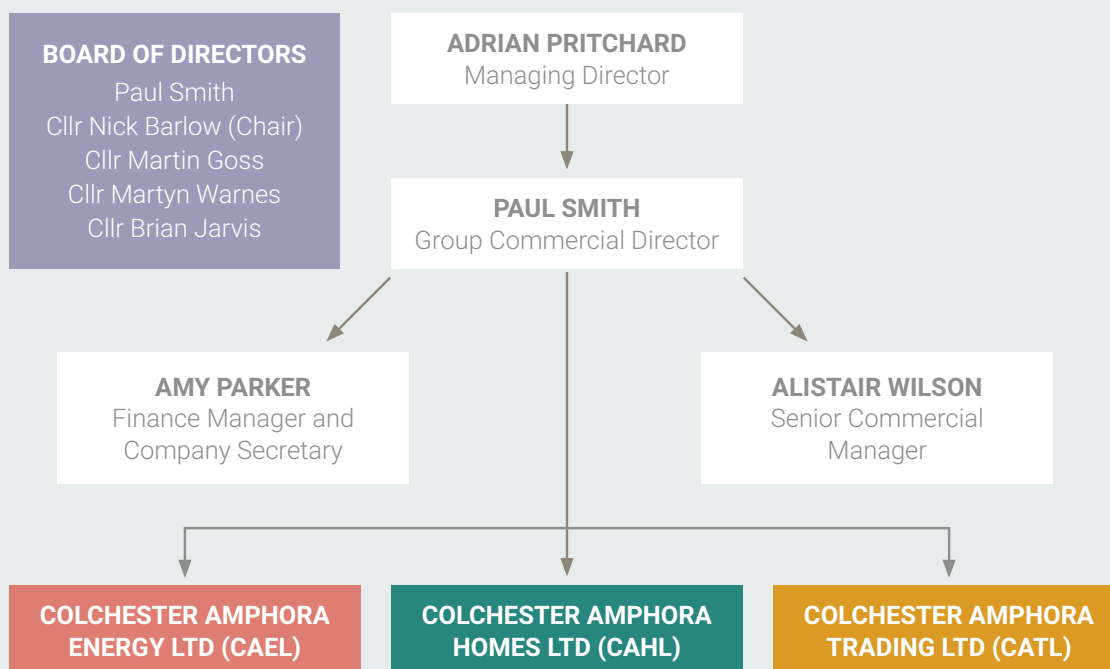
Build the brand for Colchester as a place to do business, invest, live, study and visit

HOW WE ARE GOVERNED

CCHL is operated through its Board of Directors, which has delegated authority from the shareholder (CBC) to determine strategy and direction of the business in accordance with its objectives, and through joint working with the Senior Management Team.

The directors each hold an individual responsibility for making decisions, providing leadership and monitoring the performance of the company. The directors are responsible for obtaining appropriate legal, financial and tax advice to enable them to make informed decisions about the running of the company. The directors are responsible for maintaining and regularly reviewing a robust risk management framework. The Board meet on a quarterly basis and are bound by the Articles of Association, Code of Conduct and Governance Agreement with Colchester Borough Council the company's shareholder.

COLCHESTER COMMERCIAL (HOLDINGS) LTD (CCHL)



IN 2020/21, WE...

returned a **DIVIDEND** of **£226,000**
to Colchester Borough Council

achieved a **£5.8 million** turnover

maintained a **24/7 HELPLINE** service
to **3,450** customers throughout the
pandemic without fail

Built **75km** of fibre optic networks

managed the Council's property investment
portfolio of **£42.5 million**

managed and secured
£2.9 million RENTAL INCOME

opened the **£28.8 million** Sports Park
at Colchester Northern Gateway

secured **£90,000** from the Government's
Culture Recovery Fund to support the
Covid-safe reopening of events

finalised outline planning approval drawings for
350 new homes at
Colchester Northern Gateway – South

recorded **1,852** incidents on
CCTV resulting in 14 arrests.

delivered on all services
throughout Covid-19 restrictions
successfully deploying staff to remote working

handled **£17.3 million** of land and
property assets under offer for disposal

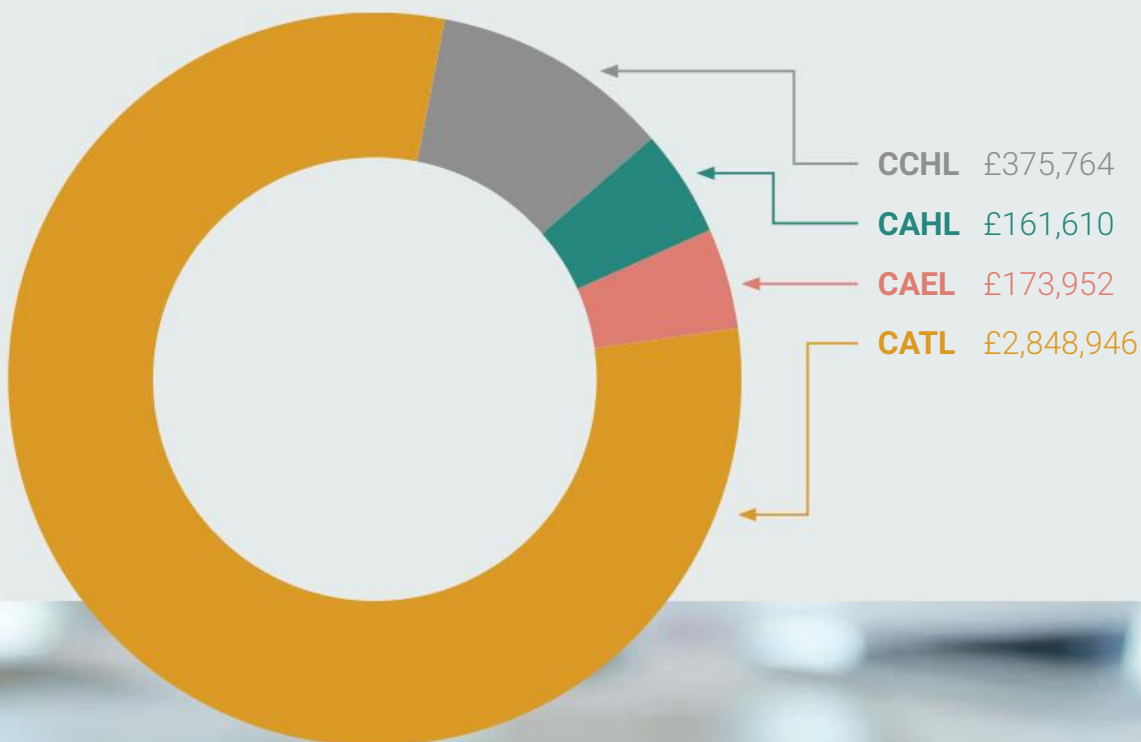
FINANCIAL REVIEW

Delivering value for the borough

Despite a challenging and unpredictable year, Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd and the Amphora group successfully delivered a revised dividend target of £226,000.

In the year ending 31 March 2021, the Group received £3.5m of income for the products and services it provides and spent £3.2m to provide its services. This includes £626,100 paid to CBC through a service level agreement for support services and accommodation; and £100,000 paid to CBC for the use of several venues used to run events across the borough.

The overall financial performance in this third full year of trading was good, and in making a profit, CCHL delivered its dividend target of £226,000 set by CBC.



COLCHESTER AMPHORA TRADING LTD

PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2020/21



COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

Colchester Amphora Trading's (CATL) Commercial Development team provides a range of services to Colchester Borough Council (CBC), as its main client. From project inception and feasibility through to full development management services and delivery of large-scale construction projects.

A highlight of 2020/21 was the opening of the Northern Gateway Sports Park. This new £28.8 million facility marked a substantial capital development project for CBC which CATL was proud to deliver. British Cycling, the UK's governing body for cycle sport, and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), supported the development through total funding of £690,000.

Located over 76 acres from junction 28 of the A12, the Sports Park is unique in Essex in featuring a floodlit, one mile cycle track, as well as learn to ride course and cycle pump track for children. It also boasts 3G pitches, grass rugby pitches, a multi-use sports centre, fitness suite, exercise studios, an interactive velo studio, indoor cricket, badminton, futsal, archery and green open spaces for informal leisure.

CATL secured a partnership with Paddy & Scott's, a local socially responsible coffee supplier, with CBC operating the Sports Park venue under a brand trading agreement.

Progress at CNG – South continued at pace with construction of 'The Walk' – a tree-lined, pedestrian thoroughfare to link existing residential areas situated east and north-east of the site with the future leisure development west of the site. Running like a spine through the centre of the development, once complete it will be suitable for walking, jogging and cycling and will have associated landscaping, street furniture and facilities to provide opportunities for relaxing, socialising and exercise. It is envisaged that The Walk will be completed August 2021.

During the last financial year, the team completed negotiations with Government and the Swedish fibre operator, VX Fiber, to seal the largest ever foreign direct investment in Colchester. Building on early works carried out in 2017-19 and a long period of negotiation with Central Government, which secured start-up funding, we secured for the Council a huge vote of confidence and support from a major international investor.



Already, a full fibre network providing gigabit connectivity to more than 8,000 properties across Berechurch and Shrub End is underway. Other parts of Colchester will follow, reflecting the aim of the Council's 2017-22 Digital Strategy that gigabit connectivity should be available to every property in urban Colchester by the end of that period.

The team will endeavour to deliver every possible benefit of this connectivity to local residencies, businesses, health and social care facilities, and is looking in detail at how it can be extended at affordable levels to the borough's social housing. It will additionally facilitate early investment in 5G technology and our efforts to attract higher quality businesses and investors to the borough.

In December 2020, planning permission was awarded to Turnstone Estates' plans for its new leisure development at Colchester Northern Gateway. The site will benefit from a 12-screen cinema, up to seven restaurants and a 90-bed hotel, two drive-thru restaurants, a bowling alley, indoor golf centre, and climbing centre as well as a high-quality landscaped piazza and parking for 750 cars – including electric car rapid charging points. The Turnstone scheme forms part of a wider development including the Colchester Northern Gateway Sports Park and up to 350 new homes, healthcare provision with older persons accommodation, and commercial floorspace.

The redevelopment of the former bus depot site on Queen Street progressed this year with planning permission now granted and funded by South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and the Town Deal. The scheme will provide new grow-on workspaces for creative and digital businesses looking to scale up, alongside a Digital Hub and café bar.

Funding from the Accelerated Town Deal led to the creation of two new public spaces at Balkerne Gate – providing much-needed space outside the newly redeveloped Mercury Theatre, and creating a vibrant new area for events, markets and al fresco dining in St Nicholas Square. Both projects are due to complete in the autumn/winter of 2021.

Finally, the year saw feasibility and design work begin on the new St Mark's Community Centre on Mill Road which will host a new church and spaces for the community to use.





ESTATES AND ASSET MANAGEMENT SERVICE

CATL provides high quality estates and asset management services to CBC for its diverse operational and investment portfolios and provides a range of specialist consultancy advice to all departments within the Council.

The service's dedicated team of professional chartered surveyors and technicians continues to focus on maximising and generating new income from CBC assets, maximising capital receipts and providing our client with good quality advice on the effective use of its property which has become even more important as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

During 2020/21, the team successfully managed Colchester Borough Council's property investment portfolio worth c. £42.5 million, maintaining £2.9m of income for the Council and a high rent collection rate despite the pandemic.

The team has continued to identify and secure asset management initiatives bringing in a substantial total capital receipt to the Council of £240k with a further £665k identified or in solicitor's hands.

Throughout the year the team dealt with the marketing and negotiation of £17.3 million worth of land and property which was under offer for disposal as well as dealing with strategic land purchases and supporting community initiatives through our consultancy work. We also secured additional fee income from our specialist valuation work in 2020/21.

Maximising asset performance is a priority for the Council and work was undertaken during 2020/21 to update the Asset Management Strategy Plan which will be implemented going forward to ensure CBC's investment and operational property portfolios continue to release opportunities to add value and support the delivery of sustainable Council services for the community.





SPORT AND LEISURE

CATL provides the commercial and strategic management of sport and leisure for Colchester Borough Council; this service does not form part of the financial performance of the company.

A challenging year for sport and leisure, 2020/21 was a year of stop start which saw Leisure World reopen in July 2020 having closed in March only to be closed again in December 2020 for the remainder of the financial year.

Even when open, Leisure World facilities had to operate under covid secure guidelines and restrictions on activities and customer numbers. When customers were able to access facilities, the feedback was very positive, with the controls in place to ensure social distancing and sanitation protocols were followed.

The disruption to the service had a significant financial impact, which in part was offset by Government support.

The dedication and commitment shown by staff in Sport and Leisure was notable. Many were redeployed as required to provide valuable support to Colchester Borough Council services and Helpline. In addition, a small team worked throughout the pandemic on core maintenance, risk assessments, customer communication and the operational plans for the opening of the Northern Gateway Sports Park. From February 2021, a number of colleagues volunteered to support the Covid-19 testing centre at Leisure World and the vaccination operation at The Community Stadium.

Against such a background there were notable achievements, in particular:

- Opening of the Northern Gateway Sports Park on 26 April 2021
- Recruitment and training of a whole new team at the Sports Park
- Retention of over 2,100 members of Leisure World
- Safe delivery of restricted activities and capacities, with adherence to all government and governing body guidelines
- Approval for the introduction of Pool View, a suite of cameras to enhance safeguarding and safety at the Leisure and Fitness pool

CATL played a leading role in the development of the customer and operations plan for the Northern Gateway Sports Park. This facility offers cycling, cricket, badminton, rugby, archery, gym and classes, as well as safe and attractive recreational space across the 76-acre site for families and individuals to enjoy.



HELPLINE

Helpline delivers a high-quality monitoring and response service to vulnerable residents across Colchester and north Essex, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Understandably Helpline has had a very challenging year, and it is credit to the team that they delivered this vital service throughout the whole pandemic 24 hours a day, 7 days a week without fail to provide this valuable support to over 3,450 customers.

Huge demand and challenge was placed on the team throughout the whole year after the UK went into lockdown. At times, with colleagues absent through shielding and self-isolation, the service and operational resilience was demonstrated with the swift re-deployment and training of additional staff from Sport and Leisure services. Throughout the pandemic crisis, and with increased demand, Helpline continued to provide a full 24/7, monitoring response and lifting service, the only provider to do so in Essex.



Whilst recruitment and retention of customers was more challenging, it was encouraging that Helpline still increased its customer base. Now 1 in 7 customers are located outside of Colchester, predominantly within the Tendring area.

The team continued to work in partnership, under Operation Pendant, with the East of England Ambulance Service to pick up non injured fallers across North Essex. During the year, Helpline reduced demand on the NHS by attending to direct referrals from the ambulance service for those that had fallen, with the majority of fallers successfully lifted by the team and not conveyed to hospital. This vital support helped decrease demand when the NHS was stretched to capacity, demonstrating Helpline's wider benefit across the whole health and care provision.

CCTV

The provision of a CCTV service supports public safety in Colchester and the surrounding area. A team of Monitoring Centre Operators oversees a network of cameras day and night. CATL runs this service on behalf of CBC.



During 2020/21, despite being a quieter year for the service due to lockdown regulations, the team still recorded 1,852 incidents which resulted in 78 arrests.

The year also saw the commencement of a major programme to replace the service's current analogue system to a modern digital system. This transformation programme has significantly increased the visibility and coverage of the camera network to support the further reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour in the town centre. In addition, the programme has connected other areas, such as Colchester Northern Gateway and the Hythe, to the central monitoring centre.

The digital upgrade is aligned to the wider investment of Local Full Fibre Network that CATL is also delivering. An alignment which is already delivering efficiencies and cost savings.

The new digital platform once complete will also enable CATL to seek opportunities for commercial monitoring of alarms and CCTV for external organisations and businesses in the future. Its deployment is underway and will be fully completed by mid-2021.

EVENTS

The Events team delivers a range of events, weddings and venue hire services across the Council's historic venues. These include the Town Hall, Colchester Castle, Charter Hall, Castle Park and the Old Heath Recreation Ground. An annual fee is paid to the Council to hire these venues.



Clearly 2020/21 is a year where events took on secondary importance, in fact the tiered restrictions and then national lockdown curtailed the vast majority of events over the last 12 months. When permitted for short periods Weddings went ahead at the Town Hall and Castle but under strict Covid secure guidelines and limitations to attendees.

In a difficult year, the team were furloughed, leaving only a minimal resource to manage customer contact, wider communications and rescheduling of events. Many of the team volunteered to work at the vaccination centre at the Community Stadium and this support was greatly appreciated.

During the year, the team made good progress with business development. The Old Library, an under-used location within the Town Hall, was brought back into use as a new venue for hire. In addition, an opportunity to deliver events for another Essex authority was secured.

Also key to business growth was the re-branding of Colchester Events into three dedicated business streams:

- Colchester Events
- Colchester Venues
- Colchester Weddings

Whilst maintaining synergies under the CATL business, each brand now has its own distinct logo, website and social media channels to enable more customer focussed marketing and refined customer journeys.

Although no events were able to go ahead, the team made huge strides in attracting major promoters and during the year announced new shows from international stars including Olly Murs, Katharine Ryan, Sarah Millican and John Bishop. The majority of events were postponed into 2021/22 including hosting of The Women's Tour which was re-scheduled to October 2021.

This year CATL also secured an award of £90,000 from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund to support the Covid-safe reopening of its venues and events across Colchester. The funding will enable CATL to implement safe practices for audiences returning to its shows once lockdown restrictions lift.

In addition, the team gained a 'We're Good To Go' mark from The National Tourist Organisations of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This recognises our venues follow government and industry Covid-19 guidelines and have processes in place to maintain cleanliness and aid social distancing.



Now as the country looks to emerge from Covid-19 restrictions, the team is well placed to return to what promises to be the most comprehensive programme of events and weddings in 2021/22.





COLCHESTER AMPHORA HOMES – PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2020/21

Colchester Amphora Homes (CAHL) is a housing development company set up to deliver new high quality affordable and private homes for the people of Colchester and the surrounding area.

The year saw a wealth of planning approvals achieved, giving the green light for CAHL to be on site building its first homes during 2020/21.

The redevelopment of a locally listed Victorian property at Creffield Rd, Lexden achieved planning approval and the year saw construction begin on the conversion of the period property into six one and two-bedroom apartments, with two apartments providing much needed social housing. In addition, construction began on two, new-build of three-bedroom family houses within the grounds. Work is due for completion in Summer 2021.

Construction also began on the redevelopment of a former residential property at Military Rd, Colchester. The site gained planning approval earlier in the year to build six one and two-bedroom apartments, plus two new two-bedroom houses. The project, which will yield 100% affordable units for social housing, is due to be completed by early 2022.

Redevelopment of the three former garage sites at Buffett Way and Scarfe Way, Colchester and Hardings Close, Aldham also advanced this year. The transformation of these premises into a total of 16 two and three-bedroom homes will increase the supply of affordable rented homes in the borough. Built to the principles of 'Future Homes 2025' standards, these clean and green homes will be comfortable and cheaper to heat for future tenants. The homes also come with allocated parking for two cars, a garden and a shed with bike storage.

The properties at Hardings Close, will all meet Part M4 Cat 2 standards, to enable wheelchair access to all outdoor spaces, and the three bedroom houses will have a level access shower with WC on the ground floor, in addition to a bathroom on the first floor. The two ground floor flats at Scarfe Way will also meet Part M4 Cat 2 standard with a level access shower. These homes will boost the borough's much needed social housing stock.

At Colchester Northern Gateway – South the year saw outline planning approval drawings finalised for the delivery of 350 new homes, including 30% affordable housing. Presentation of the scheme to the planning committee is anticipated for Summer 2021, with reserved matters approval scheduled for the end of 2021.

New designs were completed for St Runwald Street following consultation with planning and conservation. The current proposal is to deliver 36 homes with 30% of the housing being council-owned homes for affordable rent.

With continued focus on improving the availability of homes for private sale and affordable rent for local people, CBC and CAHL are working together to identify further development sites to continue the housing delivery programme. In addition to these new Phase 3 development sites, Phase 3 garage sites are also being reviewed to accelerate the social housing provision.



COLCHESTER AMPHORA ENERGY LTD - PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2020/21



Colchester Amphora Energy (CAEL) implements low carbon energy projects and provides energy consultancy in North Essex, primarily to Colchester Borough Council working with its Sustainability and Climate Challenge groups and advising on energy aspect of development projects.

The focus for CAEL during 2020/21 has been on the delivery of the Council's flagship project to install a low carbon District Heat Network at Colchester Northern Gateway. The tender for the detailed design and build, which took many months of preparation due to the complexity of the project, was issued.

This innovative scheme will provide a low carbon heat solution to residents, businesses and other commercial users. The project will deliver 5.5 GWhrs of heat a year, of which in the region of 75% of hot water for heating and washing will be generated by the heat pump. It is the first of its kind to be used on this scale in the UK, using a confined chalk aquifer, and is a key element in meeting the Council's climate change ambitions.

Work has taken place on the development of a microgrid at the Northern Gateway. An initial feasibility report has been completed and preparation began of a phase two detailed feasibility and business case. This potential circa £5 million project will provide the development with electricity generated from its own 4.5 MW PV solar farm helping reduce the development's carbon footprint ahead of the National Grid's decarbonisation. This will also create an income stream for the Council and potentially lower prices for those in the microgrid.

CAEL continues to explore new areas of business, working with the Council to look at new energy projects to meet its 2030 carbon targets.



LOOKING *ahead*



I am delighted that, despite the challenges faced by the business community in this unprecedented year, the group has delivered its forecast dividend of £226,000 to Colchester Borough Council.

As the country begins to take its first steps out of the lockdown restrictions demanded by the coronavirus pandemic, the re-building of our local economy will be vital. We know that the Amphora companies will be at the heart of this future growth, inspiring innovation across the borough and assisting Colchester Borough Council in delivering the "Town Deal" boost to Colchester.

I welcome the focus the Amphora group is giving to greener living and sustainability which are at the heart of our local economic growth. Colchester Borough Council has a key role to play at a local and regional level in tackling climate change. The delivery from Colchester Amphora Energy Ltd of the landmark District Heat Network at Colchester's Northern Gateway will ensure we can make huge strides forward in reducing our carbon footprint. Equally, Colchester Amphora Home's commitment to the Government's Future Homes 2025 principles in the design of new homes, and Colchester Amphora Trading's support for reducing the carbon footprint of ageing property assets and supporting the roll out fibre technology to residents, of all support Colchester's ambition to lead the way in environmental sustainability for a greener future.

In 2020/21, residents and businesses alike had a hugely challenging year. As well as its focus on business support and investment, Amphora is dedicated to building and promoting a healthy, vibrant and welcoming place to live, work, visit and raise families. Whether through ever-expanding new facilities for sport and leisure, an exciting new programme of music and entertainment, or new community spaces to meet and socialise with friends and family – the Amphora Group will be key to creating thriving localities for leisure, health and wellbeing across the borough.

Lastly, I must also mention my pleasure on receiving the awards of 'Entrepreneurial Council' and 'Best Commercial Council' during this year. These were a national endorsement of the drive shown by the Council and Amphora to pursue and deliver new and innovative ways to promote business, attract inward investment, create more jobs in the borough and deliver income to the council so it can continue to provide good quality services to residents and communities.

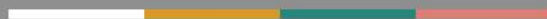
Congratulations to CCHL and our dedicated team of employees on a positive trading performance in a challenging year. The work undertaken in these unprecedented times puts us in the best possible position to face the significant challenges ahead and maintain healthy dividends for the future that are so vital to ensuring the delivery of valued services for the residents and businesses of the borough.

Adrian Pritchard
Managing Director
Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd





Colchester
COMMERCIAL HOLDINGS



www.colchesteramphora.com