



Environment and Sustainability Panel

Item

9

21 March 2024

Report of	Head of Sustainability	Author	Emily Harrup Jane Thompson Mike Polom
Title	Sustainable Travel Projects Update		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates on the City Council's sustainable travel projects and sets out key progress made since the development of "Sustainable Travel – Our Approach". This document outlines two key goals and ten outcomes which were informed by the Strategic Plan objectives, Sustainable Travel policies, the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), community engagement feedback and other national and local guidance. The two goals are to:
- Increase the proportion of short trips made via sustainable transport
 - Reduce air pollutants in the Air Quality Management areas translating into better health
- 1.2 This report shows that there has been great work undertaken with some significant achievements that are set out below. Amongst the highlights are the lowering of pollution levels in Air Quality Management Areas resulting in proposals to revoke two of the AQMA's and shrink the third, and successes include the opening of the new Secure Bike Park, refreshed Bikewise campaign, and the ongoing and expanding e-Cargo bike projects, including the opening of the first Pay As You Go shared bike hub based in the Secure Bike Park.
- 1.3 Another significant piece of work is the adoption of the Active Travel Supplementary Planning Document, which will support Essex County Council (as highway authority) in their bids for Government funding for Colchester infrastructure projects, as well as enable Colchester City Council (as planning authority) to require developers to contribute towards the strategically aligned and planned infrastructure and facility improvements.
- 1.4 A key finding from the community engagement undertaken over the past three years has continued to show that residents are willing to travel sustainably if they are given the right infrastructure and support.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To help the community in their desire to travel sustainably by supporting the work of the Sustainable Travel team in working with the County Council and partners to deliver infrastructure and projects to enable travel behaviour change.
- 2.2 Support the progress being made by the City Council in delivering the key goals and outcomes for sustainable travel in Colchester.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

3.1 To ensure that the Panel is content with the progress made to date and has the chance to feedback on ongoing work.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 Not Applicable

5.0 Sustainable Travel Progress/Updates

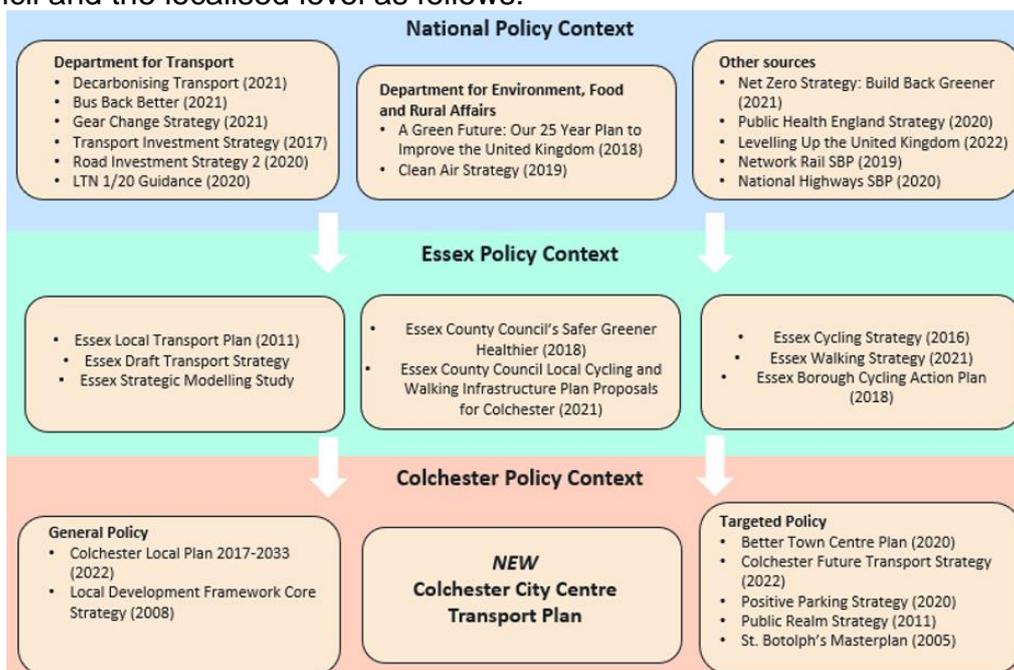
5.1 Background

5.1.1 Essex County Council (ECC), as the Highway and Transport Authority, are responsible for developing sustainable travel infrastructure to support an increase in walking, cycling and public transport use. The County Council works with Government bodies to develop policies to ensure infrastructure is provided, and is the responsible authority to make funding bids, for example the Active Travel Fund administered by Active Travel England.

5.1.2 ECC translate this requirement to the city, borough and district councils in Essex to develop sustainable travel infrastructure at the local level. In Colchester this is outlined in their Colchester Future Transport Strategy. However, the Council (and our Sustainable Travel team's work) influences, complements, supports and builds on the work of ECC and we work in close collaboration with them. Our own projects go beyond physical highway infrastructure changes to also provide facilities, support and services to enable behaviour change locally. The aligned work, and close partnership approach, has resulted in Colchester successfully achieving a high level of investment, delivering more schemes and being a front runner with innovations and momentum in sustainable travel compared to other towns or cities in Essex.

5.1.3 Our Sustainable Travel team have regular meetings and dialogue with ECC and other partners to ensure Government, regional, county and local policies and aspirations are reflected in the work we do, to ensure policies are joined-up and projects are carried out which make the best use of our and our partners' resources.

5.1.4 The policy context therefore flows down from national level, through County level, to City Council and the localised level as follows:



5.2 How we meet our goals

- 5.2.1 In order to meet our goals, we work to develop, secure and deliver a number of developer and externally funded infrastructure and behaviour change projects. We also work closely with the County Council and other partners to lobby for investment in Colchester and influence and input into proposed plans and strategies.
- 5.2.2 The current projects we are delivering are being funded by £1.19m grants successfully secured since 2018 from government departments such as Defra, £1.7m secured through s106 agreements for projects in east Colchester, £120k from partners involved in Fixing the Link, £90k from partners involved in delivering the Secure Bike Park project and approximately £25k per annum in local business and organisation contributions to host the Colchester Travel Plan Club.
- 5.2.3 The below outlines the projects and progress we have made during 2023 towards achieving our two goals and associated ten outcomes. These all contribute to meeting the needs of the community identified through our engagement over the past three years as well as the Council's strategic priorities.

5.3 Community Engagement and Partnership Working

- 5.3.1 Since 2020 we have carried out community engagement to help inform the development of our projects, our aim is to attend at least ten public events per year. We continually use the feedback from engagement to "sense check" the direction of our work and provide an evidence base for what the community tell us they want; and identify how we need to support them to use active travel.
- 5.3.2 We follow an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to our work, being led by what the community tell us they want and need, co-producing solutions and letting the community lead where possible. We work with many different partners some (not all) of which are listed below:
- ECC Sustainable Travel team, Highways (Infrastructure) and Passenger Transport (Bus, P&R)
 - City Centre BID
 - Transport East
 - University of Essex
 - Clean Air Colchester
 - Colchester, New Town and Wivenhoe Bike Kitchens
 - Colchester Cycle Campaign
 - Colchester eCargo
 - Colchester Institute
 - Destination Colchester
 - Enform
 - Enterprise car club
 - ESNEFT
 - Essex Pedal Power
 - GO4 Café/New Town Community Bike Hub
 - NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB)NHS and patient participation groups
 - Residents' Associations
 - Tier the e-scooter and e-bike provider
 - Town and parish Councils
 - Civic Society
 - Walk Colchester
- 5.3.3 During 2023 we attended 13 community events, talking to over 500 local residents with many of them trying an eCargo Bike.
- 5.3.4 Of the top three concerns highlighted in relation to cycling, the overwhelming message from the community for the third year running was:
- Not feeling safe cycling on the roads

- Lack of signage and disjointed cycling networks and
- Bike security and theft

The top concern continues to be the lack of segregated and joined up infrastructure which reflects trends elsewhere and remains the main barrier stopping people from cycling in Colchester. This needs to be tackled if genuine travel choice is to be provided and highlights the importance in delivering the Active Travel Fund, Town Deal and Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) cycle routes to enable people who don't currently cycle to have the confidence to try it.

5.3.5 In 2023 we asked the public to place stickers on a map indicating where they currently ride and where they would like to, but don't due to lack of safe infrastructure. This complements the previous two years, map of barriers to cycling which highlighted lack of cycle paths, lack of parking, lighting, physical obstacles etc. The 2023 map can be [viewed here](#). This is shared with ECC and partners to contribute to the evidence base to help support funding for new and improved infrastructure.

5.3.6 In terms of future infrastructure, ECC has produced an LCWIP which includes a number of strategic priority routes for investment in Colchester. The first route to be implemented is improving the links from the east to west and north to south via the city centre, as part of the County Council's Active Travel Fund. This scheme is to be followed by the East Hill to University and Greenstead route, which is also supported by the City Council's Town Deal. The Town Deal project includes other investment in the city centre to improve the walking and cycling environment.

5.4 Colchester Projects Related to Goal 1:

Increase the proportion of short trips made via sustainable transport

5.4.1 Strategic Influencing

- Lobbying for investment in sustainable transport infrastructure including
 - ECC's Colchester Future Transport Strategy,
 - Local Transport Plan,
 - Evolving Place and Movement study,
 - Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP),
 - Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership,
 - Town Deal, Levelling Up Fund and City Centre Master Planning etc.
- Responding to ECC's consultations such as Park and Ride service and Bus Service Improvement Plan
- Working with ECC and bus operators on the Colchester Bus Blueprint
- Assisting with the production of the Colchester Future Transport Strategy.
- Working with Transport East in the development of the Strategic Investment Programme and other policies.
- Worked with Planning colleagues in developing and successful adoption of the Active Travel SPD which will require developers to contribute towards active travel infrastructure and measures.

5.4.2 Outcome 1: More uptake of walking and cycling for short journeys such as for work, shopping, school drop-off.

- Reviewed and made recommendations to ECC on the updated Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans to help better reflect where investment is needed.

- Worked with ECC in designing and delivering the Active Travel Fund routes for example comments on design of the Greenstead to Severalls LCWIP7 route.
- Identified funding opportunities and worked with others in helping to implement Town Deal LCWIP4 route which joins the east-west route at East Hill and travels to the University and Greenstead.
- Identified student development S106 contributions for projects to help walking and cycling in east Colchester and planning the projects' delivery. For example, the Walking with Words wayfinding project delivering an innovative experience and encouraging more people to walk the route from the University and the student accommodations to the city centre and including a link from the University to Greenstead.
- Developed Fixing the Link phase 2, encouraging walking between the main railway station and the city centre, which following the successful installation of trees in North Station Road, include a drought planting scheme on the Albert roundabout.
- Working with colleagues at CBH to identify the opportunity for residential secure cycle parking to be provided in Greenstead, serving residents of the flats which don't have secure bike parking.

5.4.3 Outcome 2: More businesses trialling eCargo bikes and opting for sustainable transport options.

Cargo Bike city centre to home delivery service

- The City Centre eCargo Bike delivery service is part of a £188k funded Defra project to support residents to walk, cycle or use public transport to get into town or to park in outlying car parks. This will reduce driving through the AQMA as well as support economic growth in the City Centre as shoppers can purchase bulky items with the confidence, they can be delivered home, as well as staying in Colchester for longer to make use of leisure and entertainment facilities. The project includes developing logistics software that will interface with parcel lockers in Napier Road car park and at the park and ride, allowing shoppers to choose multi-modal active travel journeys.
- Currently reviewing project against a number of challenges faced, particularly around lockers.
- Ran a second Christmas Delivery Service trial in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2023, this time offering the service for free. Shoppers were able to use an online service to book their shopping to be collected either directly from them or from a shop, and delivered to their home for free.
 - We worked closely with the City Centre BID to promote and market the trial alongside their Christmas promotions.
 - The focus of the trial was to test logistics software, route optimisation, and speak to businesses and the public to understand and overcome barriers to use.
 - Public and businesses were very positive about the service, especially running it for free, and understood the benefit. Direct pickup from the shops and/or members of the public was very well received compared to the use of a drop-off hub.
 - Featured on BBC news over Christmas which has raised the profile of our work with other local authorities and led to knowledge sharing opportunities.

Colchester eCargo Bike Library

Our ten champion eCargo Bike businesses continue to use their ecargo bikes and promote them to other businesses, 4 businesses have taken a short-term hire in 2023.

Colchester Travel Plan Club - Travel Plan work

The Colchester Travel Plan Club continued to work closely with over 15 local businesses and organisations as paying Travel Plan Club Members (and 100 associate members) to develop and implement workplace travel plans. This has included a new site-wide travel

plan for the University of Essex and Northern Gateway as well as developing a new travel plan for Colchester City Council.

Key achievements include:

- Advised planning colleagues on planning applications where a travel plan is appropriate, including engaging directly with the applicants to ensure their developments have active and sustainable travel at their core.
- Continued to work with bus operators to negotiate and implement discounts for Travel Plan Club members, especially in a world of more flexible working. This has included reinstating a bus route from Greenstead to the University of Essex after concerns were raised by a student accommodation provider at the lack of provision.

Colchester City Council Travel Plan

- Created a pool ebike/ecargo bike booking system for staff for the return to Rowan House as well as supporting Shrub End and Highwoods Country Park with move to ebikes/cargo bikes.
- Working towards achieving Modeshift STARS Good/Very Good business travel plan accreditation for Colchester City Council.
- Recruited a new Travel Plan Club Coordinator to implement and administer the Colchester City Council travel plan.
- Coordinated a site travel survey in October 2023 including all tenants of Rowan House to better understand travel to work habits now the office has reopened.
- Developed and implemented needs-based parking permit system to manage parking sustainably at Rowan House and prioritise those with accessibility and/or business need.

5.4.4 Outcome 3: People are aware of the walking and cycling network leading to greater use of them

Requests for an up-to-date cycle map is a common request received through our community engagement. Based on this feedback the team bid to DEFRA for funding to develop a new Colchester cycling map to replace the 2016 map produced by ECC. This was successful and will be delivered in 2024. In addition funding was granted to create a new Cycle Colchester website which will also host the new cycle network map. Both projects will be community led based on feedback from 2022 and 2023 events and direct engagement with community groups that will take place during 2024.

5.4.5 Outcome 4: People feel confident about locking up their bikes safely in the town centre, so feel more willing to cycle into town.

To meet this objective which was also one of the top three themes coming out of our engagement over the last three years, in 2023 the team have :

- Opened the new [Colchester Secure Bike Park](#) in April which is operated by Spokesafe offering pay as you go secure parking and season tickets as well. Based in Portal Precinct the hub also hosts the Colchester Bike Kitchen, a DIY community bike repair workshop and the Colchester e-Cargo Bike Library hire scheme. Around £90,000 funding was secured to deliver this project. The SBP is proving popular and we are currently helping to promote it via the Bikewise campaign.
- Refreshed the [Bikewise campaign](#), working with Colchester Police, the Safer Colchester Partnership, Spokesafe and the Colchester Travel Plan Club to educate those parking their bikes to consider how and where they park and to use a quality lock.
- Review will be carried out of the existing on-street parking provision to make cycle parking safer and more convenient for all of the city's shoppers and visitors.

5.4.6 Outcome 5: Widespread take up and recognition of the benefits of cycle training to build confidence, safer cycling practices.

- Over 179 adults have received a [free Cycle Training session](#) funded by our DEFRA funding, this includes Learn to Ride, Cycle Confidence and Advanced cycle training. We still have a further 221 free spaces available and the training will continue to be promoted during 2024.
- To further improve the likelihood of children cycling independently following the year 5 and 6 Bikeability training, we are trialling a new package called Bikeability Boost funded by DEFRA and in partnership with ECC. The package has been developed following 227 parent/child survey responses and focus groups with 96 children. It is being trialled in 6 primary schools in the city centre. In addition to the Bikeability training, it includes a pre Bikeability assembly for children and parents, a transitions session in the summer term prior to starting at secondary school, opportunities to do level 3 in the summer holiday, help and support for basic maintenance and information on local support services to parents. Evaluation is taking part at all stages. To date all six schools have received an assembly and 109 pre Bikeability parent surveys have been received. The assemblies have been such a success that ECC have bid for funding to deliver these to more schools.

5.5 Colchester Projects Related to Goal 2:

Reduce air pollutants in the Air Quality Management areas translating into better health

5.5.1 Outcome 6: Residents and businesses use range of sustainable shared transport options on a pay as you go basis

To increase access to a variety of transport choices the council has set up a number of services giving access to a range of different vehicles on a pay as you go basis or as a short term hire giving the opportunity to try before you buy.

Tier eBikes

Tier launched on street pay as you go eBikes in July 2023. Since July 22,000 journeys have been undertaken. More eBikes are due to be rolled out in the coming months.

eBikes and eCargo bikes

[Colchester's eCargo Bike Library](#) now has 32 eCargo Bikes, 3 longtail eCargo Bikes, 5 eTrailers and 6 standard eBikes purchased using funding from the Energy Savings Trust and DEFRA. These bikes are distributed across the following projects.

- 1) Ten businesses championing eCargo bikes – launched 2021
 - 2) Short term hire scheme for businesses – launched in 2021
 - 3) Colchester City Centre pay as you go shared bike hub – launched October 2023
 - 4) Short term hire scheme for residents – due to launch March 2024
 - 5) New Town Community pay as you go shared bike hub – due to launch April 2024
 - 6) Colchester eCargo city centre to home delivery service
 - 7) Colchester City Council pool bike scheme for staff
- 15 members have joined the City Centre cargo bike pay as you go service since it launched in October. Most popular uses to date are for Leisure and shopping. Most of these journeys would either not have been made or would have been made by car if the eCargo bike service hadn't been available. The service will be heavily promoted over the summer via the events we attend.

- The New Town community shared hub is almost ready to launch. The storage shed has been built and soft testing is about to commence. Once launched a community guide will be developed to support other communities to set their own hubs up. We are currently working with Wivenhoe Transition Town and Town Council to submit a bid for funding to set up a shared bike hub.
- Our most recent successful Defra bid is funding a short-term hire scheme for residents to borrow an ebike or ecargo bike for up to one month. This is due to launch this month.

Wider impact of our eCargo bike work

With the increased presence of eCargo Bikes on Colchester's streets, opportunities for residents and businesses to try them out and the promotional work of our Champions, this has really kick started an interest in eCargo Bikes. We are aware of at least an additional 20 longtails and eCargo bikes in Colchester that are privately owned, and Colchester eCargo has 10 eCargo Bikes and 6 longtails in addition to the eCargo Bikes loaned by the council.

Since the commencement of our Colchester led projects in 2020 when we were aware of only one eCargo Bike user in Colchester, there are now just under 80 eCargo bikes, longtails and etrailers riding the streets of Colchester and with 2024 the year we focus on engagement and promotion of our services, this is only going to increase.

Colchester eCargo one of our eCargo Bike champions who started off with just one of our eCargo bikes, now provides employment to 12 people covering pickups, deliveries, the city centre to home delivery service and their contract with Tier to maintain and manage the on street scooters and ebikes.

Colchester electric car club

[Colchester's electric car club](#) car based in Priory Street has driven 12,951 miles since launched. A decision is awaited regarding basing the second car at Rowan house until a more permanent location is available in St Peters Street at the Ryegate House development. A car club has been built into a number of developments. We continue to request car clubs in new developments through Development team and have talked to a number of businesses and organisations regarding hosting car club vehicles.

5.5.2 Outcome 7: More people switching off their engines when stationary

- CAReless Pollution phase 2 completed in May 2023 when evaluation took place. Results are outlined in the Air Quality report.
- Phase 2 activities have included development of a film showcasing how the 'Take Care of your Air' resources can be used, school assemblies and activity, attendance at events; talks and presentations to businesses, social media, ambient advertising, and workshops and the sharing of resources with community volunteers.
- In 2023 we also completed three legacy projects working with Meadows and Adrien LeRoy a local artist to create bold and colourful murals to remind people of the importance of clean air, promote sustainable transport and encourage engine switch offs. These can be found in Queen St and St John's and St Mary's car parks.
- We continue to work with Essex County Council to obtain permission to reinstall the psychological based 'no idling' signs in Brook St and Eastgates on a permanent basis. However, Essex County Council have raised concerns about the signs that were not raised when the signs were up during the study. We feel this issue is important to resolve especially as Essex County Council are already using the results from the study as content on the new Essex Air website

5.5.2 Outcome 8: Understanding within CCC and ECC as to how the EV transition should be promoted in Colchester

- Continued to liaise with ECC and attend ECC stakeholder workshops
- Commented on ECC's draft EV strategy
- Working with ECC on potential locations for EV charging in Colchester for a LEVI bid with a focus on areas where commercial providers would not operate in line with ECC's strategy

5.5.2 Outcome 9: Residents understand and feel more supported and confident about transitioning to use an electric vehicle in Colchester.

- Promoted the car club at events as this is an easy way for residents to try out an electric car without the cost of purchase.

5.5.3 Outcome 10: Shared transport choices are accessible to all sections of our community regardless of income

- Prices for the city centre bike hub and car club have been carefully established to balance affordability with the necessity for the services to be financially viable.
- By providing pay as you go as well as try before you buy we are offering a suite of services to suit all circumstances and financial positions.
- We are working with community groups that work with underserved areas of our community on flexible ways to access our eCargo bikes to assist them with their work.

5.6 Raising Colchester's profile locally and nationally.

The evolution of our projects and the lessons we have learnt means we are seen as a regional expert on eCargo Bikes, Car Clubs and No Idling campaigns and our knowledge and experience is often sought out by others.

In 2023 we:

- Presented at the National eCargo Bike Summit in March 2023
- Presented at the Cycle City Active City national conference in Oxford in July 2023
- Presented at DEFRA's first Air Quality symposium in September 2023
- Shared knowledge with 11 other councils who asked to talk to us about our projects
- Presented to Active Essex , ECC, NECCG and other local stakeholders

5.7 Next Steps

This year we will continue to lobby and work closely with ECC and partners for ongoing investment in and delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure and projects in Colchester. We will continue to influence policy and project design for example

- Local Transport Plan,
- Evolving Place and Movement study,
- Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP),
- Town Deal, Levelling Up Fund and City Centre Master Planning etc.

In 2024 we will:

- Work with ECC in designing and delivering the Active Travel Fund routes for example refining the Greenstead to Severalls LCWIP7 route.
- Continue to identify S106 contributions for projects to help walking and cycling in Colchester and planning the projects' delivery.

- Deliver University to City Centre and Greenstead Walk with Words wayfinding project
- Deliver Fixing the Link phase 2, Albert roundabout drought planting scheme.
- Continue to work on delivering a residential secure bike parking project in Greenstead.
- Deliver our first community led Shared Bike Hub.
- Deliver our 5th DEFRA successful bid, this includes funding for two additional officers one focused on community the other on businesses. The community focused officer started in January 2024 the business officer is still to be recruited. The project includes:
 - Phase 3 of the CAREless Pollution campaign to further cement the legacy and expand the offer to include active travel through:
 - Expansion of the school toolkit to include Active Travel, and working with schools to promote it and embed it into the curriculum.
 - Development of a free business eLearning module tapping into Environmental, Social Governance and the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda
 - Closer working with health groups and stakeholders
 - Ongoing promotion to the community and recruitment and support of volunteers
 - New Cycle Colchester map
 - New Cycle Colchester website
 - New resident eBike/eCargo bike short term hire scheme
 - Extensive school, community and business engagement
 - Attend at least 10 community events to promote our services and signpost to local support.

With so many different elements to our work we have identified a need to better frame what we do and find language that will resonate with the public. Therefore, we are undertaking a strategic messaging exercise facilitated by our communication partner Meadows. We brought together key stakeholders for an interactive workshop. Early thoughts include a strong sense that language should focus on health, positivity and the individual and not climate change and negative outcomes. Out of this work we are hoping to achieve an overarching strapline and set of key messages, that we and partners (if they want to) can adopt.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 This report has no specific equality, diversity and human rights implications, however sustainable travel can help support families and people on low income by enabling options to travel to work, education or services without the need to own and run a private car. Examples include the Get Monkwick Moving project.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The projects outlined in this report contribute to the Strategic Plan 2023-2026 themes-
- [Respond to the climate emergency](#)
 - [Deliver modern services for a modern city](#)
 - [Improve health, wellbeing and happiness](#)
 - [Grow our economy so everyone benefits](#)

8. Consultation

- 8.1 There are no consultation considerations for this paper, although many of the projects referenced have community engagement elements within them and success in promoting sustainable travel will involve engagement and education of others to influence behaviour change more widely.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

10.1 There are no specific financial implications from this paper, however the projects have attracted significant investment, for example

- Over £4.5m for the Active Travel/ Town Deal LCWIP4 route from East Hill to University/ Greenstead
- Around £2.5m Active Travel route from Lexden Road to East Hill
- £1.7m s106 funds mainly from student accommodation providers in east Colchester enabling a number of projects to be implemented for example Walking with Words and Animating King Edward Quay
- £1.19 million for a number of Defra funded Clean Air projects
- £120k fixing the Link phase 2 project
- £90k Secure Bike Park in city centre
- £30k per annum to host and coordinate the Colchester Travel Plan Club
- Additionally Town Deal projects including those improving public realm encouraging more walking and cycling.

11. Community Safety Implications

11.1 There are no specific community safety implications from this paper.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 There are no health and safety implications from this paper, however sustainable and active travel helps increase activity and access to work, education and leisure meaning a benefit to physical and mental health. Also, cleaner air will help reduce the 1 in 20 deaths currently attributed to poor air quality in the city. (Public Health England)

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 There are no risk management implications from this paper.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 The projects and initiatives outlined in this report are all relevant to tackling climate change and/or improving the environment as well as increasing the level of sustainable transport, allowing people to reduce their car use. Actions and projects highlighted in the report all have co-benefits outside of environmental improvements for residents.

Background Papers

[Sustainable Transport – Our Approach](#)

[Colchester Future Transport Strategy](#)