

30 November 2022

Report of	Assistant Director Environment	Author	Rory Doyle ☎ 7855
Title	Have your say on the future of Colchester		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council is in the process of developing a new Strategic Plan with the current Plan coming to an end in 2023. In developing priorities for the future, the Council is keen to hear the views from local residents and business owners. A public survey and focus group discussions will inform decision making and the direction of any updated priorities. The Panel will receive early findings from the survey and focus groups and will have the opportunity to make recommendations for inclusion ahead of a final report to Cabinet.
- 1.2 The Policy Panel meeting on 30 November presents an additional opportunity for local people to 'have their say' directly to Members ahead of any recommendations being made to Cabinet.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 To note the early findings from the 'Have your say on the future of Colchester' survey and focus groups.
- 2.2 To hear directly from local residents and business owners ahead of making any recommendations to Cabinet.

3. Reason for Review

- 3.1 To inform future priorities and the content of a new Strategic Plan for the Council.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The Council is in the process of developing a new Strategic Plan with the current Plan coming to an end in 2023. In developing priorities for the future the Council is keen to hear the views from local residents and business owners. A survey was recently undertaken to inform decision making and the direction of any updated priorities. The Panel will receive some early findings from this survey and will have the opportunity to make recommendations for inclusion ahead of a final report to Cabinet.
- 4.2 The Council spends millions of pounds every year providing a diverse range of services to residents, business owners and visitors. In addition to the published survey a series of focus groups have been facilitated with local stakeholders. These focus groups aimed to identify the services and matters considered most important by local people and why.
- 4.3 The Policy Panel meeting on the 30th of November presents an additional opportunity for local people to speak directly to Members through an extended 'Have Your Say' item and for the panel to consider matters raised ahead of making any Panel recommendations to Cabinet.
- 4.4 The Survey and discussion groups were delivered by the Council's Internal Research Team. A copy of the survey questions are set out in Appendix A.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 5.1 The response achieved was positive with good representation of responses across wards and age groups but some groups were under-represented (particularly Males aged 18 to 24). There was good representation across ethnic groups and those that considered themselves to have a disability.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The feedback from the survey, focus groups and matters presented to Policy Panel will help inform a new Strategic Plan for Colchester.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The survey was delivered through an online survey using Customer Voice, which is the corporate software for online surveys. It was publicised in the press and through various communication channels to encourage a representative response. 1113 responses were received spread across wards and age groups but some groups were underrepresented.
- 7.2 Residents participating in the survey were offered the opportunity to win a £50 supermarket voucher as a thank you for taking part with three opportunities to win.
- 7.3 A copy of the summary findings from the survey are set out in Appendix B
- 7.4 Respondents were invited to attend discussion groups to explore themes from the survey further. Findings from the discussion groups will be presented alongside survey findings on 28th and 30th November.

8 Financial implications

- 8.1 The Councils Strategic Plan and Budget need to be aligned to ensure resources are available to deliver key services and Council priorities. Like many Councils, Colchester continues to face many financial pressures and the current cost of living crisis places the council under further pressure. A key driver for undertaking the survey is to seek input from residents and local stakeholders on how the Council allocates funds to deliver Services and future priorities.
- 8.2 Respondents were asked to rank current priorities (from 2020-23 strategic plan); any other priorities; and areas of budget spend, in order of importance. The findings from the survey will be considered alongside other evidence when setting priorities for the future strategic plan.

9 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 9.1 The survey to residents set out the Councils existing priorities under the Strategic Plan 2020-2023 including the Climate Challenge – reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, encouraging the reduction, reusing and recycling of waste. The survey also set out areas of current spend with an 'environment' focus.

Appendices

Appendix A – The survey

Appendix B – Summary of findings from the survey