

Policy Panel Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ
Wednesday, 04 August 2021 at 18:00**

The Policy Panel considers strategies, policies and legislative changes identified by Cabinet that may require review and improvement, and seeks Cabinet's agreement as to whether and how they should be examined, and reviews issues at the request of Portfolio Holders.

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

You have the right to attend all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Cabinet. You also have the right to see the agenda (the list of items to be discussed at a meeting), which is usually published five working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published.

Dates of the meetings are available here:

<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/MeetingCalendar.aspx>.

Most meetings take place in public. This only changes when certain issues, for instance, commercially sensitive information or details concerning an individual are considered. At this point you will be told whether there are any issues to be discussed in private, if so, you will be asked to leave the meeting.

Have Your Say!

The Council welcomes contributions and representations from members of the public at most public meetings. If you would like to speak at a meeting and need to find out more, please refer to the Have Your Say! arrangements here:

<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/HaveYourSay.aspx>

Audio Recording, Mobile phones and other devices

The Council audio records public meetings for live broadcast over the internet and the recordings are available to listen to afterwards on the Council's website. Audio recording, photography and filming of meetings by members of the public is also welcomed. Phones, tablets, laptops, cameras and other devices can be used at all meetings of the Council so long as this doesn't cause a disturbance. It is not permitted to use voice or camera flash functions and devices must be set to silent. Councillors can use devices to receive messages, to access meeting papers and information via the internet. Looking at or posting on social media by Committee members is at the discretion of the Chairman / Mayor who may choose to require all devices to be switched off at any time.

Access

There is wheelchair access to the Town Hall from St Runwald Street. There is an induction loop in all the meeting rooms. If you need help with reading or understanding this document please take it to the Library and Community Hub, Colchester Central Library, using the contact details below and we will try to provide a reading service, translation or other formats you may need.

Facilities

Toilets with lift access, if required, are on each floor of the Town Hall. A water dispenser is available on the first floor.

Evacuation Procedures

Evacuate the building using the nearest available exit. Make your way to the assembly area in the car park in St Runwald Street behind the Town Hall. Do not re-enter the building until the Town Hall staff advise you that it is safe to do so.

Colchester Borough Council

telephone (01206) 282222 or textphone 18001 followed by the full number you wish to call

e-mail: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk

www.colchester.gov.uk

Policy and Public Initiatives Panel – Terms of Reference

- (1) To consider strategies, policies and legislative changes identified by Cabinet that may require review and improvement and to seek Cabinet's agreement as to whether and how they should be examined.
- (2) To review issues at the request of a Portfolio Holder and to make recommendations back to the Portfolio Holder for decision.

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
Policy Panel
Wednesday, 04 August 2021 at 18:00

The Policy Panel Members are:

Councillor Sam McCarthy
Councillor Chris Pearson
Councillor Peter Chillingworth
Councillor Pam Cox
Councillor Mark Goacher
Councillor Chris Hayter
Councillor John Jowers
Councillor Martin Leatherdale
Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell

Chairman
Deputy Chairman

The Policy Panel Substitute Members are:

All members of the Council who are not members of the Panel.

AGENDA
THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING
(Part A - open to the public)

Please note that Agenda items 1 to 5 are normally dealt with briefly.

1 Welcome and Announcements

The Chairman will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chairman will invite all Councillors and Officers participating in the meeting to introduce themselves.

2 Substitutions

Councillors will be asked to say if they are attending on behalf of a Committee member who is absent.

3 Urgent Items

The Chairman will announce if there is any item not on the published agenda which will be considered because it is urgent and will explain the reason for the urgency.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors will be asked to say if there are any items on the agenda about which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest which would prevent them from participating in any discussion of the item or participating in any vote upon the item, or any other pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest.

5 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Panel will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2021 are a correct record.

Policy Panel Minutes 16 June 2021

7 - 10

6 Have Your Say!

The Chairman will invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition on any item included on the agenda or any other matter relating to the terms of reference of the meeting. Please indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

7 Update on Covid 19 Commemorations

11 - 14

The Panel will consider a report that details some of the ideas for commemorating Covid 19 within the borough that have been suggested already and sets out a proposed plan for developing ideas further.

8 Policy Panel Work Programme

15 - 16

The Panel will consider its work programme for the 2021-22 municipal year.

9 Exclusion of the Public (not Scrutiny or Executive)

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

Part B
(not open to the public including the press)

POLICY PANEL

16 June 2021

Attendees: Councillors Chillingworth, Cox, Goacher, Hayter, Jowers, Leatherdale, McCarthy, Pearson and Scott-Boutell.

Substitutes: None.

Also Present: Councillor Dundas

18. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

19. Have Your Say!

Mr Nick Chilvers attended and addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to ask that the Council push for levelling up of the South of Colchester, which should follow the expected infrastructure audit that had been signalled at a previous Cabinet meeting by Councillor Andrew Ellis, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning.

Mr Chilvers argued that areas like Shrub End had fewer employers and worse infrastructure than other areas, whilst it had large and increasing amounts of housing, along with other built-up areas across South Colchester. Improvements in services and infrastructure in the North were referenced and similar were requested for the South. This was argued to be a way to prevent increases in crime.

Mr Chilvers requested that 'levelling up of South Colchester' be added to the Policy Panel's work programme.

The Panel responded to the arguments made by Mr Chilvers. This included agreement that there needed to be equality of opportunity across Colchester, and a view expressed by one member that the planned infrastructure audit would be a good idea and that this should include measures of accessibility of services, work opportunities and environmental measures, such as air quality.

Addressing Mr Chilvers' points regarding improving South Colchester, suggestions included seeking ways to protect Middlewick Ranges, a Southern relief road, greening of more public spaces and repairing of river/waterway fronts.

Clarification was asked as to whether the Panel had the power to recommend such an audit to Cabinet, whether Mr Chilvers would need to make this recommendation

directly to Cabinet, what overall powers the Panel had and whether it could seek to change its terms of reference.

Councillor Paul Dundas, Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Leader of the Council, attended and, with the permission of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. The Leader agreed that the Council had a responsibility to help 'level up' local areas. £18m Town Deal funding had already been received and more bids for funding were being made. Plans were being made to bid for a further £20m, and in cooperation with Essex County Council, further bids for around £50m.

Regarding the terms of reference for the Policy Panel, the Leader explained that the public could speak at any committee or at Full Council to give their views, and to bring forward initiatives to suggest. The new terms of reference for the Policy Panel had been drafted so as to show that Cabinet had confidence in the Panel and its work.

There was concern raised that the newly changed terms of reference for the Policy Panel had removed the parts which specifically noted that members of the public could bring initiatives up for consideration and seemed to indicate that the Panel would only be able to consider items at the direction of Cabinet. Members spoke to underline the importance of ensuring that the public had a platform for being heard and urged a change in the terms of reference to re-introduce the ability to engage with the public and consider public initiatives. Members were also keen to explore issues of concern to them and their residents, such as the future of Middlewick Ranges, possibilities for improved transport links and green spaces and repairing of river banks and other public areas.

A member argued that the Panel should have more scope to scrutinise policies, in addition to ensuring that public initiatives be considered. It was hoped that Cabinet would be open and receptive to suggestions for different approaches.

It was agreed that further discussion of the Panel's terms of reference would be best conducted as part of the following item, 'Work Programme 2021-22'.

20. Work Programme 2021-22

The Panel considered a report on its work programme for 2021-22.

The Leader of the Council gave assurances that Cabinet would look favourably on any requests by the Panel to examine issues, and that the public could still come to the Panel to raise their views and ideas. The Leader raised Cabinet's wish for the Panel to engage with the public, such as with looking at options for a Covid memorial for those who lost their lives, and to pay tribute to key workers. Other areas in which the Panel could work with the public are in finding ways to support parish councils' work, exploring options for Platinum Jubilee celebrations. It was recommended that the Panel leave some space in their work programme so it could be reactive and add items as they come to prominence.

The Panel discussed its concerns regarding its amended terms of reference. It was noted that the old terms had specifically included a term relating to the proactive identification of issues and that these could be taken to Cabinet for approval to

examine them. The Panel discussed ways in which the Council had previously engaged with the public. It was argued by one member of the Panel that, with a certain punctuation, the terms of reference would give the Panel the power to be proactive in putting forward work programme suggestions for approval, including issues of a more significant nature than had been so far suggested for this year's work programme.

A Panel member requested that there be a standing item on each agenda to allow for ideas to be brought forward for requesting to be added to the Panel's work programme. A further Panel member queried whether the changes to the terms of reference represented a centralisation of power to what has become a smaller Cabinet. It was questioned whether the Panel should be able to add items to its work programme without needing to seek Cabinet agreement first, and whether public initiatives could be put to Cabinet to approve for Panel consideration.

A further view given was that the panel had worked very well in identifying and discussing issues and that there should not be the presumption that Cabinet knows best. A two-way dialogue was argued for between the Panel and Cabinet; the Leader was asked for a degree of flexibility in the operation of the Panel and its work programme, otherwise debate and initiative would be stifled.

The Leader emphasised that the change in terms of reference was intended to simplify the Panel's operation, not to stifle it. If the Panel requested permission to look at something, Cabinet would look favourably on such requests. He underlined his view of the importance of preserving the Panel's ability to look at issues in depth and detail.

It was queried how the Panel's terms of reference, which had been set and agreed at Full Council, could be changed. It was noted that the Panel did not have the power to change its own terms of reference, but the comments from the Leader regarding flexibility in the Panel's operation were welcomed. There was reassurance for some members in what the Leader had said regarding the Panel being able to continue to work with Cabinet, suggesting work programme items for Cabinet approval. The Leader signalled his willingness to discuss the terms of reference and suggestions for amendments intended to clarify them and underlined his wish for the Panel to focus on issues where positive Council action was possible, rather than issues where nothing could be done.

RESOLVED that the work programme would be amended so that the Panel would consider Covid memorial options on 4 August 2021, Grounds maintenance contract on 22 September 2021 and the Platinum Jubilee on 24 November.

Report of	Assistant Director Environment	Author	Hayley McGrath
Title	Update on Covid 19 Commemorations		☎ 508902
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our communities and continues to do so. Many people across the Borough have been impacted in terms of health and loss of loved ones, alongside the effects on businesses and jobs. Key workers continued to deliver vital services and many residents have volunteered to help those more vulnerable than themselves.
- 1.2 The Council would like to formally recognise the impact that the pandemic has had and lead the Borough in paying tribute to those that have been affected. As well as saying thank you to all those that have played a part in delivering services, help and support.
- 1.3 Although the pandemic is not over yet, it is felt appropriate to start considering what actions the Council can take to ensure that there is a fitting programme events, that can take place as soon as we are able to.
- 1.4 This report details some of the commemorative ideas that have been suggested already and sets out a proposed plan for developing ideas further. It is envisaged that there will be further reports to the Panel to agree a final programme of events.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel are requested to consider the details in this report and agree the proposals at section 5.
- 2.2 Suggest any further actions that they think should be considered for inclusion in the commemorations.

3. Reason for Review

- 3.1 The Policy Panel has been asked to consider suggestions for commemorative events and / or memorials with a view to making an overall recommendation to Cabinet about how the pandemic should be marked.

4. Background Information

4.1 There are three key areas of commemoration to be considered:

- Paying respects to those that passed away during the pandemic.
- Thanking key workers and volunteers for their efforts.
- A permanent memorial to all those that have been affected by the pandemic.

4.2 Paying Respects

4.2.1 The latest government figure for covid related deaths in Colchester is 408 since the start of the pandemic. However, many more families in the Borough have lost relatives since March 2020 and the restrictions that have been imposed have meant that they have not been able to commemorate their lives as they normally would have. Numbers able to attend funerals have been severely restricted and memorial events were not able to take place.

4.2.2 The Bishop of Colchester has highlighted that this has had a significant impact on peoples' ability to grieve.

4.2.3 Therefore, it is suggested that there should be a memorial service for all of those that have passed away since March 2020, from whatever cause.

4.2.4 The Mayor has been approached by the High Steward, Sir Bob Russell, who has suggested a format for the event, similar to the Festival of Remembrance that is held at the Royal Albert Hall each November. With the commemoration to be held in two halves – the first half, a more solemn service of remembrance, and the second half, an uplifting programme looking forward to the days ahead.

4.2.5 It is anticipated that this would be a free to attend event at Charter Hall, to take place sometime later in the year or possibly early next year, depending on how the pandemic continues.

4.2.6 The intention is to have this as multi-faith event, open to all sectors of our community. It is also hoped that the event could be replicated across the Borough. Whilst Charter Hall is central, not everyone will be able to go there. Therefore, working with faith and community groups, the idea is to set a format for the event that others can follow in their own areas such as village halls or places of worship. The intention being that over a set weekend the whole of the borough will be able to commemorate together. This could be titled something along the lines of 'Colchester Remembers'.

4.2.7 Alongside the festival type event the Cemetery and Crematorium are looking to hold a more intimate service in the grounds of the cemetery.

4.3 Thanking Key Workers & Volunteers

4.3.1 Early on in the pandemic the Council recognised the work of community champions across the borough with a community recognition award 'Together We Can' which recognised and celebrated community pride in neighbourhoods across the Borough and offered thanks to individuals and community groups who gave their time and efforts to create a lasting impact within their communities. Many of those nominated had provided support to others in their area during the initial lockdown.

- 4.3.2 However, the Mayor would like to host an event to thank key workers, across all sectors, and also make it a community celebration of better times ahead.
- 4.3.3 There are no firm details for this yet, but one suggestion is to have a community picnic in Castle Park with some events and entertainment.
- 4.3.4 We are also aware that the Borough Police Commander is keen to hold a community meet and greet day for the emergency services, and it may be possible to combine these events.

4.4 Permanent Memorials

- 4.4.1 It has been suggested that there should be some form of permanent memorial in Colchester to all those that have been affected by the pandemic, but there has not been any clear idea of what form that should take or where it should be placed.
- 4.4.2 However, any form of memorial will be an additional expense, both in terms of delivery and on-going maintenance, and it may be that the Council's role will be to enable / support a community approach - providing guidance on what steps need to be taken, where to look for sources of funding or how to crowd fund. Local memorials are also likely to be more meaningful.
- 4.4.3 It is proposed, however, to install a small memorial of some kind in the cemetery.
- 4.4.4 We are also aware that some Councillors are looking at using their locality budgets to install commemorative benches in their wards. It could be an option to have a bench and plaque designed, so that they all look the same and this could then be offered to community groups who have a small amount to spend on a memorial item in their area.
- 4.4.5 It may also be possible to do some form of tree planting, however it is likely that there will be a focus on trees for the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations next year.

4.5 Other Issues to consider

- 4.5.1 At this point in time, there is no clear indication of when the pandemic may be over. Therefore, it is hard to say exactly when events might take place. Whilst restrictions have currently been lifted, they could be reimposed if infection rates do not fall significantly. However, if restrictions are not reimposed it is hoped that a community thank you / celebration could be held in the autumn and the commemorative service could take place later in the winter.
- 4.5.2 Whilst there are no details, it is envisaged that there could be some form of national event to mark the second anniversary of Covid on 23 March 2022.
- 4.5.3 A small budget of £10,000 has been allocated for covid commemorations. This has not been allocated to any specific item and it is for this Panel to recommend the how the budget could be spent to Cabinet.
- 4.5.4 The Council is not the only organisation that is looking at how to remember the impact that the pandemic has had, and indeed the Council should not take the lead on all activities.

5.0 Proposal

5.1 At this stage is it proposed that:

- 5.1.1 The idea of a remembrance festival, that can be replicated across the Borough, is developed, with a programme for the event and how that can be shared with the community.
- 5.1.2 A community celebration event is arranged, working with other agencies such as the emergency services.
- 5.1.3 A design for a memorial bench and wording for the plaque is drawn up.
- 5.1.4 The Assistant Director Environment and the Corporate Governance Manager set up a small working group of relevant officers and representatives of other organisations, such as One Colchester and the BID, to ensure that covid commemorative activities are co-ordinated throughout the Borough and not all actions remain the responsibility of the Council.
- 5.1.5 An update report be submitted to the Panel at its meeting on 22 September 2021.

6.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 There are no direct equality, diversity or human rights implications as a result of this report however it is intended that all covid commemorative actions will ensure that they are open to all sectors of the community.

7.0 Standard References

- 7.1 There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

8.0 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct environmental and sustainability implications as a result of this report however and covid commemorative actions will be carried out will consider environmental and sustainability impacts.

Policy Panel

Item
8

4 August 2021

Report of	Assistant Director Corporate and Improvement	Author	Richard Clifford ☎ 507832
Title	Work Programme 2021-22		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the current Work Programme 2021-22 for the Policy Panel, providing details of the items of business that are currently scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the Panel's Work Programme for 2021-22 as set out below and to confirm the appropriate scheduling of work items.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 This function forms part of the Panel's Terms of Reference and, as such, no alternative options are presented.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The Policy Panel's work programme will evolve as the municipal year progresses. Items can be added to the work programme at the request of Portfolio Holders and/or Cabinet requesting policies, strategies or other issues to be reviewed.

5. Standard References

- 5.1 There are no specific references to publicity or consultation considerations; or financial; equality, diversity and human rights; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 Policy review is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing.

Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Work Programme 2021-22

16 June 2021
1. Work Programme 2021-22
4 August 2021
1. Covid 19 Commemoration
22 September 2021
1. Grounds Maintenance Contract – Business Case
24 November 2021
1. Queens’s Platinum Jubilee
12 January 2022
2 March 2022