

Extract from the draft minutes of the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel meeting of 19 June 2019

26. Work Programme 2019-20

The Panel considered the draft Work Programme for 2019-20, presented by Owen Howell, Democratic Services Officer. A report on potential recreational and commercial uses of the River Colne was being prepared and was due to come to the Panel in July. A public engagement session had been provisionally scheduled for 25 September, and the Panel was asked to approve the method to be used in gathering initiatives and ideas from the public prior to that date, in the same manner as was used in 2018/19. The input into this session would be used to further populate the Panel's Work Programme. The impact of Austerity and Universal Credit had been scheduled for November 2019 in order to allow more time to investigate options for inviting external guests, such as from the Department for Work and Pensions. Options for the High Street had been scheduled for 15 January 2020 in order to allow for this to be considered after the Council has received confirmation as to whether it has progressed to Phase 2 of the 'Future High Streets' bidding process.

Panel agreed that the High Street item scheduled for 15 January 2020 would be a large-scale item attracting much interest, and so should be the sole item on that agenda.

Councillor Scordis, who had chaired the Panel when the 2018 public engagement session had been held, confirmed that more public input had been received for that Panel meeting than for most Panel or Committee meetings, but this still had not been a huge response. He recommended that ways to increase publicity on this should be found.

The Panel discussed potential recommendations to Cabinet as to issues for the Panel to consider in the future.

A member of the Panel requested that Panel seek Cabinet approval to examine the committee system model for the Council's administrative arrangements, on the basis that this would provide far greater opportunity for public engagement and transparency of decision making compared to the current Cabinet and Leader model adopted by the Council. The positives and negatives of the two administrative arrangements were briefly discussed, particularly in relation to greater strategic decision making opportunities within Cabinet and Leader arrangements and the slower nature of decision making within a committee system.

Councillor Cory, Leader of the Council, attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. He confirmed that he would welcome a review of the Council's administrative arrangements at the appropriate time. Councillor Cory explained that, under his leadership, he had encouraged more open decision making

and the widening of democratic opportunities and had welcomed good ideas and initiatives, including those from members of the Opposition.

The Panel members requested an update from Councillor Cory on the potential for the Council to become carbon-neutral. Councillor Cory informed the Panel that he and Councillor Whitehead would be submitting a motion to Council, seeking to declare a Climate Change Emergency. The aim would be for the Council to become carbon-neutral by 2030, with the issue being taken on by the Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group.

The Panel asked if further consideration should be given to 'The Walls Project', as previously considered. Councillor Cory detailed work being done by the Council and the Colchester Business Investment District (BID). Dan Gascoyne, Chief Operating Officer, was of the view that the Panel did not need to take further action on the Walls Project, and offered to bring an update back for Panel Members' information.

The Future Options for the High Street Programme item was discussed. Councillor Cory confirmed that, in principle, he would be in favour of pedestrianizing the High Street, but that significant public consultation would be necessary and that the significant transport implications that this would entail would need to be mitigated through working in cooperation with Essex County Council. Councillor Cory confirmed that Colchester's bid for 'Future High Streets' funding had centered around promotion of the Town's significant heritage.

Councillor Cory updated the Panel on progress regarding Sustainable Transport. He explained that it was a vast area of possible work and would be considered by the new Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group. The Group would consider items such as electric cycle hire and other cycling issues, rapid transport systems and potential for third-party community transport bus services. Councillor Cory confirmed that it was for the Panel to decide whether there were further aspects of this subject that they would recommend for examination. A Panel member requested that options for secure and/or covered cycle parking be investigated. Councillor Cory informed the Panel that Councillor King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, was currently considering this.

A request was made by the Chairman for the Panel to gain Cabinet approval to investigate the potential for providing a sports and social centre for young people, following the example of local authorities who had set up Youth Zones in partnership with the charity Onside and private sector funding. He explained that the Youth Zone in Barking and Dagenham attracted 3,300 members in its first four weeks and currently accommodated 1,900 users per week.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2019 be noted.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that approval be given for the following items to be included in the Policy and Public Initiative Panel's work programme for the future:-

- (i) A review of the Council's Cabinet and Leader model of administrative arrangements to determine whether the Council should continue with these arrangements or revert to a committee model;

- (ii) To investigate the potential for providing a sports and social centre for young people, in the form of a Youth Zone;
- (iii) To investigate the provision of secure and covered bicycle parking options for Colchester.