

Policy Panel Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ
Wednesday, 30 November 2022 at 18:00**

The Policy Panel provides legislative, improvement and policy advice to Cabinet and Portfolio Holders on issues that may affect executive functions. The Panel considers issues at the request of Cabinet and Portfolio Holders and must seek approval from Cabinet on whether and how issues proactively identified by the Panel are examined. The Panel also considers initiatives for review from members of the public.

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.

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Access

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www.colchester.gov.uk

Policy 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 CITY COUNCIL
Policy Panel
Wednesday, 30 November 2022 at 18:00

The Policy Panel Members are:

Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell
Councillor Chris Pearson
Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor Phil Coleman
Councillor John Jowers
Councillor Jocelyn Law
Councillor Rhys Smithson

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 Councillors will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on (insert date) are a correct record.

Policy Panel Minutes 21 September 2022

7 - 14

6 Have Your Say! (Hybrid meetings)

Members of the public may make representations to the meeting. This can be made either in person at the meeting or by joining the meeting remotely and addressing the Panel via Zoom. Each representation may be no longer than three minutes.

Members of the public wishing to address the meeting remotely may register their wish to address the meeting by e-mailing democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk by 12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting date. In addition, a written copy of the representation should be supplied for use in the event of unforeseen technical difficulties preventing participation at the meeting itself.

There is no requirement to pre-register for those attending the meeting in person.

7 Have your say on the future of Colchester

15 - 24

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.

8 Colchester Landscape, Nature and Waterways Strategy development proposal

25 - 30

It is proposed that the Policy Panel oversee the development of a new Landscape, Nature and Waterways Strategy which will set the direction for numerous activities and developments covering all aspects of open space and all areas of the borough, including rivers, lakes, and coastline. This, having a direct contribution to the social, environmental, and economic outcomes for the Borough.

9 Work Programme 2022-23

31 - 32

This report sets out the dates of the Work Programme for 2022-2023 for the Policy Panel and gives the Panel an opportunity to consider what subjects for which it may wish to request Cabinet approval for the Panel to consider in the 2022-23 municipal year. Cabinet may

also wish to consider what subjects it might want the Policy Panel to consider during 2022-23.

10 **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

21 September 2022

Attendees: Councillors Scott-Boutell [Chairman], Coleman, Jowers, Law, Pearson and Smithson.

Substitutes: Councillor Lissimore for Councillor Bentley.

54. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

55. City Status – Meaning and Opportunities

Andrew Weavers, Monitoring Officer, gave a verbal update on the progress of the formal process to gain city status, and the Council's work on this and on ways to celebrate. The death of Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, had caused a postponement of the extraordinary Full Council meeting which had been scheduled to formally accept the letters patent which would grant city status. This was both as a mark of respect, and as it could not have proceeded as planned due to the letters patent being dated for 12 September 2022, which was four days after the date of Her Late Majesty's death. The letters patent had been collected from the Palace on 8 September, but the Crown Office had then contacted the Council to notify the Monitoring Officer that the letters had become void due to being dated for 12 September 2022. This circumstance had never before occurred. Two options were discussed, with the first being that the letters patent could be returned and backdated, and the second being that they be rewritten in the name of His Majesty King Charles III. As city status had been granted by Her Late Majesty, the preference given by the Monitoring Officer was for a backdating of the letters patent. Following the seeking of constitutional legal advice by the Crown Office, it was confirmed that this approach would be legally sound and therefore the letters patent had been returned to the Palace and would be redated with the new date given of 5 September 2022. This was the date on which Her Late Majesty had signed the warrant for city status with the Royal sign-manual. A new date was now being sought for the necessary extraordinary Full Council meeting, which would likely now occur in October 2022.

The Panel was informed that the year of celebrations would commence from the new date of the necessary extraordinary Full Council meeting and a bid had been submitted for a royal visit. If this were to happen it would likely occur in late Spring or early Summer 2023.

The Panel discussed the update and asked if there were any updates on plans for celebratory events, noting that much of what had been considered would not have been possible given that the original date for the extraordinary Full Council would not

have allowed sufficient time for plans to be put in place. Councillor Adam Fox, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation, informed the Panel that Cabinet had discussed the Policy Panel's ideas at its most-recent Cabinet meeting and had approved of the overall direction and feel of the Panel's suggestions. Officers were now examining the feasibility of different ideas and looking to plan the celebratory events. The Deputy Leader explained that the period for celebratory events could last longer than a year, which would give flexibility for any events or ideas which would require significant amounts of planning and preparation.

The Panel queried whether spending on celebratory events which had already been planned would be covered within the Council's 2022-23 Budget, or whether these would appear within the 2023-24 Budget. The Deputy Leader confirmed that this question was being looked at.

A Panel member stressed the importance of welcoming members of the public to attend the extraordinary Full Council meeting, and for the details of this meeting to be advertised as widely as possible once they have been confirmed.

56. Cost of Living Crisis – Council Response

Michelle Tarbun, Group Manager - Wellbeing, Prevention & Partnerships, and Zoe Raven, Partnership & Delivery Manager presented the Council's work on assisting residents in addressing financial difficulties. The Group Manager explained that the situation was constantly changing and that officers sought to advertise all major developments to residents and elected members on a regular basis.

The Panel were told that the Council could not operate alone, and that partnership working was vital, allowing the pooling of talents and resources, and for residents to be quickly signposted to organisations which could assist with the issues they faced. A joint Council/Colchester Borough Homes working group had been set up and had then been expanded to become a wider 'One Colchester' Partnership working group, which had commenced the drafting of an action plan to cover the Borough. A current priority was to ensure provision of warm spaces for the coming Winter, and a mapping exercise was being conducted to see what warm spaces were already available and to ascertain geographic areas where they were absent or sparse in number. The Panel was also informed that Cabinet had recently approved additional funding to local foodbanks.

The communications campaign was outlined, with webpages on the Council's website to give information, advice and signposting relating to the cost of living crisis. Content had been designed to easily direct the public to relevant organisations which could provide assistance, to reduce labour-intensive demands on officers to provide direction and advice to residents. Social media posts also provided information and ways for people to obtain advice. A video was being produced for use in public areas such as libraries and GP surgeries. This aimed to reach a wider audience and increase residents' knowledge of their entitlements.

The established support teams already operated by the Council were described, with demand for their assistance continually increasing. Zoe Raven, Partnership & Delivery Manager, explained that Financial Support Officers triaged contacts from

residents through to appropriate services and could offer foodbank vouchers where appropriate and administer discretionary funds. About 50% of funding allocated for use on discretionary housing payments had so far been allocated. The Council worked with Essex County Council [ECC] to pay out discretionary funding to applicants and ECC had the ability to offer vouchers for any applicants which had missed out on funding. The payment of Council Tax rebates was explained.

The cost of living crisis was having significant effects on pensioners, those residents who had disabilities and anyone who was not in a position to be able to increase their income via work. The Council was focused on maximising the claiming of entitlements and benefits by residents who were eligible. A summary was given of the appeals process for those residents who were turned down for different types of financial assistance. The Financial Inclusion Team's work to help residents maximise their incomes was described. Community Support Officers worked alongside Financial Support Officers to triage residents to where they could receive assistance, and were also able address wider problems and offer advice on housing issues and ways to help residents improve their ability to gain employment. Officers were experienced at spotting signs of problems and could help assist in prevention of problems reoccurring for members of the public. Additional training was being rolled out to ensure that officers could maintain the efficacy of their support work. A database of support schemes and grants for people in energy poverty, including from energy providers, was being designed. It was also confirmed that councillors could refer residents to the Council's teams to obtain support and advice.

Council officers regularly conducted outreach work with partners, taking part in events run by local church groups, Community 360, the Job Centre, community centres and foodbanks. In addition, tools and training for identifying problems and directing those in need to services were provided to representatives of a range of community groups and partners. The Council's engagement with established groups helped to increase the spread of information and advice from the Council and its partners in providing support options. This work also helped to reach out and talk to people in need, outside of the formal benefits system, and also helped the Council engage with people who struggled to get into central Colchester.

The Partnership & Delivery Manager described plans to hold a roadshow across the Borough. Investment had been made into a program which could take in financial/economic information (such as rates of inflation) and identify the geographic areas which would be worst affected by changes. An information pack was being designed for distribution in the hardest-hit areas and the roadshow would be there to engage with residents or to give contact details for residents to contact the Council or its partner organisations at a later date. It was expected that the roadshow would also assist the Council in better engaging with rural communities.

The Group Manager emphasised that the Council's work was not only focussed on financial support and benefits, but also aimed to address the wider impacts on people, such as effects on mental health and wellbeing. A local delivery pilot scheme to help health, wellbeing and physical fitness was being run and supported by the Council. Addressing the pressures being experienced by its own staff, the Council was providing assistance including advice on the intranet, drop-in sessions to listen to problems and offer advice on subjects such as income maximisation, and a 24-hour 'phone lined for staff members or their family members to gain wellbeing advice

and information about support that was available.

The vital nature of effective data collection and analysis was stressed, especially that which related to the relative efficacy of interventions made by the Council and its partner organisations. A dashboard to display such data was being developed to maximise the impact of interventions.

Further Government announcements were expected, and assurance was given to the Panel that the Council would advertise any additional entitlements to financial support which apply to residents within the Borough. A plea was made for councillors to help officers in reaching those residents who could benefit from the assistance which was available.

Councillor Jeremy Hagon attended and, with the permission of the Chairman, participated in the Panel's discussion.

The Panel thanked officers for their work, and it was acknowledged that the Council had limits to its capacity to help residents, making its role as an enabling organisation an important one, providing direction to a range of organisations which could offer help and support. This would become even more important as the cost of living crisis increasingly affected households which had previously been comfortably off. Praise was given for the recognition of the wider effects on wellbeing, including the effects on the Council's own staff.

Panel members underlined the need to provide contact pathways for residents to access help even if they were not digitally active and could not engage with online contact avenues. Efforts to take advice and contact roadshows out into different communities were praised and officers were urged to consult with local councillors in areas where sites were found to be difficult to locate. A Panel member suggested that producing and delivering leaflets door-to-door might help the Council reach those without digital access. Officers were asked if there was scope for Council officers to attend councillors' advice surgery sessions to offer advice. Concern was raised regarding how to reach digitally excluded residents in small rural communities, who would find it harder to access advice and where communally held knowledge of the benefits and financial assistance options could be lower than in some other types of community. Panel members suggested that the Council could look at approaching local community newsletters and newspapers to carry advice articles and adverts carrying information from the Council regarding where residents can seek help and advice.

A further concern was that the scarcity of social housing meant that applicants often had to move away from family support and advice networks in order to gain housing. A Panel member urged for more to be done to examine whether local links to areas could be strengthened regarding the allocations policy in place over the letting of Council-owned properties, and how new developments might be forced to provide a certain number of new properties which would only be available for those with links to the local area. It was confirmed that Scrutiny Panel was due to examine this issue at its meeting scheduled for 8 November 2022.

Concern was raised by a number of Panel members that the Council's current website design was dull and unappealing. Requests were made for a rebranding and

brightening of the content and branding, to engage better with visitors and emulate the appealing branding shown in other publicity materials and presentations produced by the Council. The importance of language/wording choice was emphasised by one Panel member, who asked how the Council decided upon the wording of its materials. A suggestion was made that the Council could look to match the wording and approach taken by central government's online content. The Group Manager took on the suggestions regarding online presentation and wording and told the Panel that she would discuss this with the Council's Online Team to seek ways to improve how information is presented.

The Panel discussed the Cabinet's three-point plan to address the cost of living crisis. Point three, 'Prevention of Hardship', was discussed and a Panel member suggested that this should be reworded, as the Council could help to minimise hardship but could not prevent it entirely. An example given was the suggestion that the Council should take a tougher line with utility providers who were responsible for lengthy loss of supply to residential properties owned by the Council. The Deputy Leader of the Council agreed that language use was very important, especially during crises, and argued in favour of the use of the phrase 'Prevention of Hardship' as the Council could offer crisis support to prevent additional hardship.

A request was made for a summary to be produced and circulated to councillors to show what types of requests for help are made of the Council by residents, and the numbers of requests being made.

The Panel asked for details of any funding or support which might be available to support potential providers of community/communal warm spaces. The Group Manager explained that the County Council had funding which could be used by community groups to help them offer warm spaces.

Responding to questions about the local development pilot funding to improve physical and mental health, the Group Manager explained that the funding was to support communities to set up initiatives to improve levels of wellbeing, and offered to share more information to councillors who would like to know more. The link between physical fitness and wellbeing was emphasised by the Panel.

Officers were asked what support there was available to help and advise residents facing difficult financial and lifestyle decisions, and whether data held on vulnerable residents could be used to identify those who might benefit from being contacted to discuss potential avenues of support.

The Group Manager explained that data sharing, including with the County Council, could be difficult. The data teams at the Council and County Council did talk regularly. Regarding the use of data to identify people who may need support, this was easiest for tenants of Council or private properties, but was more difficult with people who owned their own properties.

The Panel were informed that the 'Anti Loo Roll Brigade' mentioned in the report was a community group, set up during the height of the pandemic, which aimed to provide community support and help to those in need.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that: -

- a) The Council makes its website more user-friendly, with better branding to maximise its effectiveness at providing information and links to organisations which could provide advice and assistance
- b) Cabinet ensures that future resourcing reflects the need to support people across all communities within the Borough

RESOLVED that the Policy Panel had previously examined the situation relating to the payment and claiming of Universal Credit and that an agenda item be provisionally added to the Panel's Work Programme for 2023-24 for the Panel to re-examine the local situation relating to Universal Credit in twelve-month's time.

57. Work Programme

Rory Doyle, Assistant Director (Environment), addressed the Panel to explain that Cabinet and officers were working on development of the new Strategic Plan, with a programme being planned to consult and survey the views of residents, focus groups, businesses, and local organisations. The suggestion was made that the Panel's meeting scheduled for 23 November 2022 could be promoted and used as an avenue for garnering the views of residents, businesses and organisations to feed into the creation of priorities for the new Strategic Plan.

The Panel agreed that it was important to involve the wider community in creating the Strategic Plan, and stressed the importance of giving as much notice as possible so that people had the opportunity to contribute. It was also noted that public expectations would also need to be managed. A Panel member urged the Panel to work with the Cabinet, avoiding confrontation and considering ideas and feasibilities free from ideological concerns.

The Panel urged officers and Cabinet to create better, more engaging names for plans and strategies. The Assistant Director agreed, and confirmed that Cabinet also agreed. Language used was important and it was recognised that strategic documents needed to use effective language to catch people's interest and make documents easily understandable. Councillor Adam Fox, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation, agreed with the points on language use, and gave assurance that this would be heeded when wording the Strategic Plan. This would make it clear that the Plan would address what people wanted Colchester to look like by 2030, and what they wanted the Council to do.

The Assistant Director explained why the draft Green/Blue Infrastructure Strategy could not be brought for the Panel to consider at this meeting, with the Portfolio Holders wanting more work to be done to the draft before it was looked at by councillors. It was proposed that this Strategy be examined by the Panel at its meeting on 23 November 2022.

It was confirmed that updates on city status ramifications and celebrations were planned for future Panel meetings. Other potential subjects for consideration by the Panel were raised.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that Policy Panel be given permission to consider the following subjects: -

- a) Council support for small local businesses
- b) Proposals for a Colchester Rapid Transit System, including design, plans and connectivity [subject to the Monitoring Officer's advice]

RESOLVED that the Policy Panel will: -

- a) Receive continuing updates on city status matters
- b) Receive an item on the Green/Blue Infrastructure Strategy at its meeting on 23 November 2022
- c) Use its meeting on 23 November 2022 as an opportunity to gain views from residents, business and organisations for inclusion in the drafting of the Council's new Strategic Plan

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

We are seeking your views and opinions to help inform the future of Colchester.

Like many councils, Colchester continues to face many financial pressures. We are seeking your input to help us review our priorities so that we can continue to support our residents and deliver the services you need and deserve. We would be grateful if you could spare a few minutes of your time to input into this discussion by completing this short survey and help inform our future. **This survey will close midnight Monday 1 November. As a thank you for taking part, we are offering you the opportunity to win 1 of 3 £50 supermarket vouchers (of your choice).** Following this survey, we will be looking for volunteers to attend face-to-face focus groups/workshops. Please provide your contact details when prompted if you are willing to take part. *Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. Colchester Borough Council takes the management of personal data seriously and it does this in compliance with data protection laws. All information collected will be used for research purposes only. We will never share personally identifiable information with third parties for promotional purposes. The information you supply will be kept for 2 years and at which point it will be disposed of securely. For further information about how your data is used and stored, please go to www.colchester.gov.uk/privacy. (Colchester Borough Council have little or no influence over a number of services. This includes but is not limited to education, roads and infrastructure as these are managed by Essex County Council and their budgets).*

1.How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements about Colchester?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Don't Disagree	Know N/A
I enjoy living/working in Colchester	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a sense of community in the area of Colchester	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend other people to live or work in Colchester	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2.If you didn't agree with any of the above statements, what changes in Colchester would you like to see?

3. Below are the current 5 priorities for Colchester Borough Council which were laid out in the 2020–2023 Strategic Plan. Please rank these in order of importance by dragging and dropping or using the arrows on the screen.

There will be opportunity to tell us about any other items you think should be a priority later.

THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE (including; reducing carbon emissions and achieving net zero carbon footprint for services by 2030, improving air quality, encouraging the reduction, reusing and recycling of waste).

CREATING SAFE, HEALTHY AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES (where people feel empowered, self-sufficient, healthy, active, happy and doing what they enjoy).

DELIVERING HOMES FOR PEOPLE WHO NEED THEM (including; delivering more affordable homes and improving existing council homes).

GROWING A FAIR ECONOMY SO EVERYONE BENEFITS (including; working with partners to facilitate a highly skilled, high wage, low carbon workforce and ensuring the new economy is greener, sustainable and more resilient).

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE AND CULTURE (including; helping the sector to grow and improving the cultural offer for residents and visitors).

4. What would be your number one priority for the council over the next 3 years?

Please either choose one of the above stated priorities or tell us a new one you think should be considered.

5. Please explain your answer and any thoughts you have regarding Colchester Borough Council's current priorities.



6. The following services cost the most to run. Please rank them in order of importance to you and how this budget is spent.

They are currently in order of most to least spend, (Environment being the most and Community Initiatives being the least). If you are happy with how the budgets are currently allocated, there is no need to change their order.

ENVIRONMENT (including; street cleaning, the River Colne, tree maintenance, refuse, waste and recycling and community and countryside management)

BUILDING MAINTENANCE (including; repairs and maintenance to council owned building such as the Town Hall and cleaning)

MUSEUMS (including; front of house, building maintenance and costs, exhibitions and curation)

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES (including; Running costs of Castle Park, Highwoods and playgrounds across the Borough)

ARTS AND TOURISM (including; The Visitor Information Centre, The Arts Centre, events, Firstsite and Mercury Theatre)

CORPORATE FUNCTIONS (supporting the running of the council, including; training and insight and development work)

SPORTS AND PLAYING FIELDS (including; sports pitches and other open spaces for recreational use)

SPORT AND LEISURE (including; building maintenance, cleaning, staffing and equipment)

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES (support to enable communities to be stronger and more resilient)

7.Colchester will soon become a city which will bring many opportunities. This may include positive changes to income, education, employment, culture and tourism and investment into the Colchester City area. What opportunities do you hope Colchester City status will bring you?

8.Do you have any other thoughts or comments regarding Colchester Borough Council's priorities?

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To further our understanding of your thoughts regarding the future of Colchester, we would like to invite you a focus group where you can speak to us with a small group of people (up to 8), about what is important to you.

9.Would you be interested in speaking to us about the future of Colchester in a focus group?

These are open discussions, led by YOU (our residents) about what is important to you in Colchester. There will be a number of groups with 6–8 people having an informal discussion about what you'd like to see changed in Colchester and will last no longer than 2 hours.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Yes, but online only
- ☐ No

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About You

10.What is your age group?

Select your answer

11.What is your gender?

Select your answer

12.How would you describe your ethnicity?

Select your answer

13.Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Select your answer

14.Which ward do you live in?

Select your answer

15.Which of the below statements best describes you?

Please tick all that apply

- ☐ I am a Colchester resident
- ☐ I am a Colchester business owner
- ☐ I work in Colchester
- ☐ I work for Colchester Borough Council (including councillors)
- ☐

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Prize Draw!

If you would like to be entered into the prize draw to win one of 3 £50 supermarket shopping vouchers please provide your name and contact details below.

16.Full Name

17.Please enter your telephone number

18.Please provide your email address

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SURVEY HEADLINERS

- The majority of respondents agreed that they enjoy living/working in Colchester (67%)
- Fewer respondents agreed that they felt a sense of community in the area of Colchester (42%)
- Just over half agreed that they would recommend other people to live or work in Colchester (51%)
- 'Creating Safe, Healthy and Active Communities' was the 1st or 2nd priority for 60% of respondents. 28% of respondents ranked 'Delivering Homes' as their bottom category
- 85% of respondents ranked 'Environment' either first or second (out of 9) in order of importance to them in terms of budget spend. 36% ranked 'Parks and Open Spaces' first or second in order of importance. 71% ranked 'Corporate Services' 8th or 9th (out of 9).
- The town centre was mentioned throughout the surveys open text boxes (in addition, in the top priorities open text box, of those that answered, 25% said regeneration of the town centre should be the number one priority of the council).
- When asked about Colchester becoming a city, the regeneration of the city centre received the highest number of comments at 22%. Next, was culture/heritage and tourism at 21%.
- 13% of those that responded felt negatively towards Colchester becoming a city.
- New developments and lack of infrastructure to support them was mentioned throughout the survey (schools, doctors surgeries and traffic etc)
- Stanway and other retail parks were highlighted as having a detrimental effect on the town centre (often mentioning the free parking at retail parks).
- The desire to have pride in the place which they lived was mentioned throughout the survey, however currently this appears to be lacking for a number of residents
- Although climate and environment is important to many respondents, many also felt that green transport options are not feasible in today's world and that the council should accept the use of cars and work with not against them.

The above topics and themes will shape the focus groups. These will be fluid and move with the discussion on the day depending on how the attendee's answer.

30 November 2022

Report of	Assistant Director Environment	Author	Rosa Tanfield Group Manager, Neighbourhood Services
			☎ 03300 538047
Title	Colchester Landscape, Nature and Waterways Strategy development proposal		
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The current Parks and Open Space Strategy was launched in 2008, and the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy was launched in 2011. Since then, how residents, visitors and the public use, view and engage with the spaces, and the ambitions of the Council have changed. The timing is right to review and implement a new strategy, using learning from the Woodland and Biodiversity Project, and ahead of a new in-house grounds maintenance service.
- 1.2 It is proposed that the Policy Panel oversee the development of a new Landscape, Nature and Waterways Strategy which will set the direction for numerous activities and developments covering all aspects of open space and all areas of the borough, including rivers, lakes, and coastline. This, having a direct contribution to the social, environmental, and economic outcomes for the Borough.
- 1.3 It is proposed that a new strategy is developed with the Policy Panel working alongside officers and the Portfolio Holder to develop this piece of work.
- 1.4 A pilot project has been undertaken to trial a new approach to strategy development in collaboration with the University of Essex – Participatory Governance and Budgeting. This could form the basis of the strategy development, depending on the outcome and assessment.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To agree to undertake work to develop a new strategy through a series of workshops.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Council has the opportunity to undertake a considered review and develop a new strategy for Colchester to guide future decision making ahead of changes that could impact on service delivery in the future.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 If no review is undertaken, the service delivery continues under the existing vision and strategy which moving forward will not be fit for purpose as it will no longer align to the

ambitions of the Council, or the use, views and needs of communities and users. This could potentially limit the ability for successful service delivery in the future and impact on income to the Council.

5. Background information

- 5.1 The Council previously developed a Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2011. However, this is now dated and requires review as the Borough has changed significantly over the last decade. The current Parks and Open Space Strategy is dated 2008 and therefore is out of line with the Council's current aims and objectives, nor is it aligned to how residents, visitors and the public use, view and engage with spaces now.
- 5.2 The Council is undertaking good work in managing its landscapes, open spaces and waterways demonstrated through its awards and Green Flag accreditation for its parks and public open spaces. But with changes to the Council's ambitions around biodiversity, following learning from the award nominated Woodland and Biodiversity Project, now in its fourth year of a five year project, there has been much learnt, and with the recent decision to bring in-house the grounds maintenance service in October 2026, and coupled with the recently launched Essex Climate Focus Area via the Essex Climate Action Commission, the timing is right to review and set in place a new Strategy.

Proposed approach

- 5.3 It is proposed that a strategy is developed that will better align to the wants, needs and ambitions of all, drawing on engagement from the public and across the organisation. It also provides the opportunity to draw into the strategy a focus on our waterways (rivers and coastline) as well as how these assets can support the climate emergency response. This will be an important piece of work that will set the strategic direction for numerous activities and developments, will be broad ranging (covering all aspects of open space and all areas of the borough, including rivers, lakes, and coastline), as well as integrating with policies and strategies such as sports and planning.
- 5.4 Whilst yet to be developed a new strategy will need to:
- Identify and provide an assessment of the assets and infrastructure network.
 - Set out the key drivers and 'needs' for landscape, nature and waterways in the borough.
 - Identify areas of deficiency in terms of quality, value, and accessibility.
 - Identify priority areas and areas of opportunity. To include improvements to existing assets and new assets; and
 - Set out mechanisms for delivery. To include priority projects, actions and partnership working.
- 5.5 The strategy will need to carefully consider the following:
- People and place (Social benefits)
 - Management of the environment (Environmental benefits)
 - A resilient economy (Economic benefits)
- 5.6 It is proposed that the Policy Panel will lead the development of the new strategy working with the Portfolio Holder and officers. In order to do this effectively and to the right level of detail a number of workshops are proposed in addition to the Panels current work programme. The workshops will vary between 1 and 3 hours long. Sessions will focus on particular topics and agreed outcomes. Site visits, case studies, and other data and insight will help inform the members of the group.

- 5.7 An update on the progress of the strategy development will be provided at each Environment and Sustainability Panel, until such time as the strategy has been fully drafted. Due to depth and complexity of this project work, it is expected that the programme will be approximately 18 months long.

First stage

- 5.8 As a first stage in developing the new Strategy, the Council has been working in partnership with Essex Business School (EBS) on a pilot project focusing on the River Colne, funded by the University of Essex's Priority Challenges Fund. The pilot project aimed both to make use of participatory governance mechanisms and to investigate possibilities for developing a participatory governance framework for the future development and eventual implementation of the strategy.
- 5.9 Workshops were held with approximately thirty stakeholders from a wide variety of organisations between 27th June and 5th July 2022. The aims in holding the workshops were:
- 1) **To identify priority areas for the River Colne relating to the new strategy.** As this is being developed under the strategic themes of 'Tackling the climate emergency and leading sustainability' and 'Creating safe, healthy, and active communities,' this included deliberations on a variety of social, environmental, and economic challenges and needs along the upper, mid, and lower sections of the river.
 - 2) **To identify mechanisms by which the strategy could be developed with the active participation of a wide variety of stakeholders i.e., local groups, community organisations, businesses, environment and ecological expertise, and agencies alongside the Council.** Participants considered how we could move beyond more familiar forms of consultation to thinking about co-creating a strategy.
- 5.10 Feedback from the workshop participants has been good and a draft report is now being finalised before sharing. The Panel will receive a full briefing on this work and use this to help inform the next steps of the development of the strategy.

6. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 6.1 Landscape, nature and waterways have a direct impact on the environment, and it is clearly set out that there should be positive outcomes for the environment and sustainability. This is driven through the Council's own ambitions. This will be further explored as the programme of development takes place, but could include supporting resilient ecosystems and biodiversity, mitigating and adapting the natural and built environment to climate change, conserving and enhancing a legible network of physical green spaces, improving and better-connecting ecological networks, delivering net gains in biodiversity and ecosystem services, developing greater resilience to climate change, delivering sustainable water management: help reduce flood risk, manage drought, improve water quality, and improve connectivity to reduce the loss and quality of aquatic habitats and wildlife, enhancing the stewardship of existing assets to increase its benefits and outcomes for people, places, and nature, and enabling the delivery of more green infrastructure in accordance with best practice.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Transformation funding has been allocated to support this piece of work, the allocation of which will be closely monitored and reviewed to ensure no over-spend.
- 7.2 Consideration will be given to the impact of a new strategy on operational budgets.
- 7.3 Consideration will also be given to the wider impact and benefit of natural assets on the local economy. This could include the development of partnership and or applications for external grant funding, creating attractive areas for investment, supporting the environmental resilience of economic sites, promoting economic growth, employment and skills improvement, supporting local businesses, tourism and visitor destinations, and responding to growth of the borough. This will be further explored as the programme of development takes place.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 It is proposed that the strategy will be developed through the workshops proposed above. If deemed appropriate and following a review of the pilot project, Participatory Governance and Participatory Budgeting may be used to develop the strategy. A programme and other information will be published.

9. Strategic Plan References

- 9.1 This project work is directly aligned to the Council's strategic priorities of *Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability* (in particular, responding to the climate emergency, see Section 6.), and *Creating safe, health and active communities* (in particular, building on community strengths and assets). It is hoped that the strategy will look to consider or address aspects such as creating an environment and the conditions to support community led action, improving mental and physical health, and the cohesion of local communities, promoting healthy behaviour e.g., encouraging physical activity and active travel, improving social contacts and giving people a sense of familiarity and belonging, supporting the development of skills and capabilities, providing opportunities for people to connect with the landscape and nature, addressing inequalities in provision of open space, assets are an essential infrastructure in place-making and in associated planning and land use decisions, maintaining and enhancing cultural heritage, landscapes, and natural resources, and creating and maintaining sustainable places.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 10.1 This report sets out proposals for an approach to developing a new strategy. It does not propose or set out to make any service changes at this stage and to that extent it does not impact on the promotion of equality and overcome discrimination in relation to gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, and race/ethnicity. However, any proposed changes through the development of the strategy will give proper consideration to equality, diversity, and human right implications.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 It is clearly set out in the proposed objectives that there should be outcomes for communities (see Section 9). This will be further explored as the programme of development takes place. Any proposed changes through the development of the

strategy will give proper consideration to health, wellbeing, and community safety implications.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 It is clearly set out in the proposed objectives that there should be outcomes with health and safety. This will be further explored as the programme of development takes place. Any proposed changes through the development of the strategy will give proper consideration to health and safety implications.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 There are no implications at this stage, but as the development of the strategy takes place, proper consideration and reporting of risk management will be made.

Policy Panel

Item
9

30 November 2022

Report of	Assistant Director, Environment	Author	Owen Howell
Title	Work Programme 2022-23		☎ 282518
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the dates of the Work Programme for 2022-2023 for the Policy Panel and gives the Panel an opportunity to consider what subjects for which it may wish to request Cabinet approval for the Panel to consider in the 2022-23 municipal year. Cabinet may also wish to consider what subjects it might want the Policy Panel to consider during 2022-23.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the dates of the Panel's Work Programme for 2022-2023 as set out below and to consider if it wishes to request Cabinet approval for work items to be added.

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 by 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 Panel Work Programme 2022-23

15 June 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Programme 2022-23
3 August 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City Status – meaning and opportunities [verbal update]• New Voter ID requirements [verbal update]• Hear ideas from the public
21 September 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost of Living Crisis and update on Council mitigations of financial inequality
30 November 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Landscape, Nature and Waterways Strategy• Developing Strategic Plan consultation
11 January 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate Change Policy• How to develop roles of CBC Champions• City Status – meaning and opportunities
1 March 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grounds Maintenance Contract• Council Support for Small Local Businesses• City Status – meaning and opportunities

Items which need to be scheduled for 2023-24

Universal Credit/Financial Inequality – for September 2023