

# Council Meeting

**Council Chamber, Town Hall, High Street,  
Colchester, CO1 1PJ  
Thursday, 07 December 2023 at 18:00**

# 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>.

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## Access

There is wheelchair access to the Old Library from West Stockwell Street. There is an induction loop in all the meeting rooms.

## Facilities

Toilets are located in the entrance lobby just outside the Old Library.

## 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 City Council

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e-mail: [democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk)

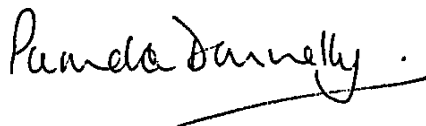
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**COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL**  
**Council**  
**Thursday, 07 December 2023 at 18:00**

**TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**Published 30/11/2023**

**You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council to be held on Thursday, 07 December 2023 at 18:00 for the transaction of the business stated below.**



**Chief Executive**

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

**Please note that the business will be subject to short breaks at approximately 90 minute intervals.**

**1 Welcome and Announcements (Council)**

The Deputy Mayor will welcome members of the public and Councillors and will ask the Chaplain to say a prayer. The Deputy Mayor will explain the procedures to be followed at the meeting including a reminder everyone to use microphones at all times when they are speaking, but otherwise keep microphones muted.

**2 Have Your Say! (Council)**

Members of the public may make representations to the meeting on any item on the agenda or any other matter relating to the business of Council. Members of the public may register their wish to address the Council by e-mailing [democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk) by 12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting. However, advance registration is not mandatory and members of the public may register to speak in person immediately before the meeting.

**3 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 registerable interest or non-registerable interest.

- 4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Council)**  
A... Motion that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.
- Council minutes 181023** 11 - 24
- 5 **Mayor's Announcements**  
The Deputy Mayor to make announcements.
- 6 **Items (if any) referred under the Call-in Procedure (Council)**  
The Council consider any items referred by the Scrutiny Panel under the Call-in Procedure because they are considered to be contrary to the policy framework of the Council or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the budget.
- 7 **Electoral Review of the City of Colchester** 25 - 52  
B... Motion that the recommendations in the report of the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer be approved and adopted.
- 8 **Appointment of Temporary Councillors to a Parish Council** 53 - 54  
C...Motion that the recommended decision in the report by the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer be approved.
- 9 **Recommendations of the Cabinet, Panels and Committees**  
Council will consider the following recommendations:-
- 9(i) **Appointment of Deputy Mayor 2024-25** 55 - 56  
D.... Motion that the recommendation contained in draft minute 806 of the Cabinet meeting of 22 November be approved and adopted.
- 9(ii) **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places**  
E.... Motion that the recommendation contained in the draft minute from the Governance and Audit Committee meeting of 28 November 2023 be approved and adopted (to follow).
- 10 **Notices of Motion pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 11**  
Council will consider the following Motions:-  
(Note: The maximum length of time for the consideration of all such motions shall be 80 minutes. In the event that a motion is still being debated when the 80 minutes have elapsed the Mayor shall invite the proposer of the motion to respond to the debate and then move straight to the vote.)

10(i) **Impact of the Conflict in the Middle East**

Motion F

Proposer: Councillor Goacher

*Colchester City Council recognises the significance of the tragic situation in the Middle East to our city and its impact on our local communities, including the rising incidence of antisemitism and Islamophobia, and the potential need for Colchester to provide sanctuary to refugees fleeing the conflict.*

*We therefore call on the UK Government to use its influence to press for the urgent release of all hostages; for international law to be upheld and for the protection of all civilians in Israel and Palestine; for an end to the collective punishment of the Palestinian people and an end to the siege of Gaza to allow vital supplies of food, fuel, medicine and water to reach the civilian population; and to join with the international community and the UN and its aid agencies in urgently pressing all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire.*

As the motion relates to a non executive matter it will be debated and determined at the meeting.

10(ii) **City of Sanctuary**

Motion G

Proposer: Cllr J. Young

Seconder: Cllr Dundas

*This Council acknowledges the overwhelming tragedies of the ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza and other conflicts around the world.*

*Residents of all persuasions will be feeling powerless, scared and uncertain here in Colchester too.*

*Residents in our City have friends, relatives and family connections with Israel and Gaza and we acknowledge the shock, terror and grief that they must be feeling.*

*The Council's number one priority at this time is to keep all of our residents safe and we are working with our partners in the Police and charities such as Refugee, Asylum-seeker and Migrant Action (RAMA) and Community 360 to help keep everyone, and especially those most vulnerable in the City, as well supported as possible.*

*Colchester as a City of Sanctuary has a vision of being a welcoming place of safety for all. We are proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. We reaffirm our commitment to this important work and thank our officers for the*

*most difficult but vital work they do to support all communities in our City especially at this difficult time.*

As the motion relates to a non executive matter, it will be debated and determined at the meeting.

### 10(iii) **Accuracy in Financial Reporting**

Motion H

Proposer: Paul Dundas

*This Council notes that:*

1. *Colchester City Council recently published on its website a list of payments to suppliers over the last 12 months, this being a statutory duty pursuant to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, revealing to Colchester Council Tax Payers where their money was being spent.*

2. *As originally published, these statutory disclosures stated that in the past 12 months Colchester City Council had spent, amongst other payments, £2,200,809 on stationary, £245,552 with the Anti-Loo Roll Brigade, £245,000 with the Grosvenor House Hotel, over £2.1m on election software, £880,000 on playground inspections, over £5m on newspaper advertising, over £1m on an individual no one can identify, £350,000 on printing, £847,000 on telephone bills, just under £5m with a Christian Empowerment Charity, £8,646 on Oysters, £130,000 on mobile phones and £1,097,146 on Ice Creams.*

3. *Upon Conservative Councillors querying some of these items it was ascertained that the data for at least 9 of the 12 months was erroneous, many of the payments listed did not in fact occur, and consequently the published figures were removed from the website and the Leader of the Council issued an apology to Councillors.*

*Therefore, the Council:*

1. *Thanks the Leader of the Council for prompt acknowledgement of the error and the email notification of the data failures issued on October 31.*

2. *Thanks and notes the work of Conservative opposition councillors who brought these errors to the attention of the Council.*

3. *Informs Cabinet that the operational finance team may be under considerable time pressure and a review of its workload would be appropriate.*

4. *Urges Cabinet to issue apologies to the Council Tax Payers of Colchester for publishing erroneous information, and also to*

*each and every recipient of payments for which erroneous information was published.*

5. *Requests Cabinet ensure that robust procedures are put in place to ensure all financial information put into the public domain is accurate.*

As the motion is not an executive matter it will be debated and determined at the meeting.

#### 10(iv) **Knife Crime**

Motion I

Proposer: Cllr Goss

*Council*

1. *Notes and congratulates the Evening Gazette on their anti-knife campaign launch last month in association with the arrival of the Knife Angel statue to Colchester.*
2. *Notes the tragic consequences of knife attacks on families and friends and recognises the bravery and work of Ann Oakes-Odger MBE whose son was sadly murdered through stabbing.*
3. *Notes the alarming increase in knife carrying, nationwide, particularly by those associated with gang membership and/or illegal drug activity.*
4. *Welcomes the work of the police in tackling all forms of crime and the progress they are making, including reducing violent crime. And welcomes their work to raise awareness through the deployment of a knife arch in Colchester centre and work with knife amnesty and knife bins.*
5. *Notes the work of the Youth Voices Listening Project that found “knife crime and knife harm stood alongside fights and drug use as major concerns for young people in Colchester”.*
6. *Therefore calls on Colchester Council through the Safer Colchester Partnership to deepen multi-agency collaborative working on this issue. And with our schools and young people to continue work done through the Knife Angel visit. To help make Colchester and its surrounding area safer for us all, particularly our younger residents.*

As this motion relates to an executive matter, the suspension of Council Procedure Rule 11(2) will be moved to allow the motion to be debated and determined.

10(v) **CCTV in Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles**

Motion J

Proposer: Cllr Harris

*That this Council agrees to lobby the relevant Government Department to introduce mandatory regulations which would install CCTV / taxi cameras in Hackney Carriage / Private Hire vehicles which would be to the benefit of both drivers and customers in the City of Colchester area.*

As the motion relates to a non-executive matter , it will be debated and determined at the meeting.

11 **Questions to Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 10**

Cabinet members and Committee/Panel Chairs will receive and answer pre-notified questions in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10(1) followed by any oral questions (not submitted in advance) in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10(3).

(Note: a period of up to 60 minutes is available for pre-notified questions and oral questions by Members of the Council to Cabinet Members and Chairs (or in their absence Deputy Chairs)).

At the time of the publication of the Summons no pre-notified questions had been received.

12 **Parental Leave Policy for Councillors** 57 - 62

K... Motion that the recommended decision in the report by the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer be approved and adopted.

13 **Schedule of Portfolio Holder Decisions** 63 - 70

Council is invited to note the schedule of Portfolio Holder decisions for the period 7 October 2023 - 27 November 2023.

14 **Urgent Items (Council)**

Council will consider any business not specified in the Summons which by reason of special circumstances the Deputy Mayor determines should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.



15 **Reports Referred to in Recommendations**

The reports specified below are submitted for information and referred to in the recommendations specified in item 9 of the agenda:

**Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, report to Governance and Audit, 28 November 2023 complete**

71 - 84

16 **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)**



# Council

Wednesday, 18 October 2023

**Attendees:** Councillor Simon Appleton, Councillor Tracy Arnold, Councillor Lewis Barber, Councillor Lyn Barton, Councillor Kevin Bentley, Councillor Michelle Burrows, Councillor Mark Cory, Councillor Pam Cox, Councillor Robert Davidson, Councillor Paul Dundas, Councillor Andrew Ellis, Councillor Mark Goacher, Councillor Martin Goss, Councillor Jeremy Hagon, Councillor Dave Harris, Councillor Mike Hogg, Councillor Alison Jay, Councillor John Jowers, Councillor David King, Councillor Richard Kirkby-Taylor, Councillor Darius Laws, Councillor Michael Lilley, Councillor Sue Lissimore, Councillor Andrea Luxford Vaughan, Councillor Jackie Maclean, Councillor Roger Mannion, Councillor Sam McCarthy, Councillor Sam McLean, Councillor Sara Naylor, Councillor Steph Nissen, Councillor Chris Pearson, Councillor Carl Powling, Councillor Kayleigh Rippingale, Councillor Thomas Rowe, Councillor Lee Scordis, Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell, Councillor Fay Smalls, Councillor Paul Smith, Councillor Natalie Sommers, Councillor William Sunnucks, Councillor Leigh Tate, Councillor Martyn Warnes, Councillor Dennis Willetts, Councillor Julie Young

## **633 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bloomfield, Buston, Law, Moffat, Smithson, Spindler and T. Young.

## **634 Prayers**

The meeting was opened with prayers from the Reverend Dr Amanda Elmes.

## **635 Have Your Say! (Council)**

Sir Bob Russell addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) to express his disappointment that the motion on transparency on the agenda needed to be tabled. Confirmation was sought as to who within the Council had agreed to hand over Holy Trinity Churchyard to a quango, the Town Deal Board, and the date on which this occurred. The Board's proposals for Holy Trinity Churchyard had not been considered by Councillors. Meetings of the Town Deal Board were not held in public. Attendance at the meetings were poor and the minutes were inadequate. Given

that there was only one City Council member, it was unaccountable. The Board's proposals for Holy Trinity Church would lead to the creation of an area where anti-social behaviour would flourish.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, indicated that he would send a full written response. However, the establishment of the Town Deal Board was an essential pre-requisite to receive Town Deal funding from the government. This funding had been used to support a wide range of projects across the city. Whilst it could be described as quango it was supported by the Council and had been subject to democratic processes and scrutiny. The proposals for Holy Trinity Churchyard had been consulted on and had secured significant support. The areas of concern could be locked at night which considerably lessened the risk of anti-social behaviour.

Simon Collis addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) about the impact of the housing crisis. He wanted to act as a voice for those who had been affected by the housing crisis. Figures obtained from the Council showed that in 1994 there were 8047 social housing dwellings in the borough, but by the close of 2022 there were only 5907, a decrease of 2140 dwellings. He explained his personal circumstances and that he and his family would be potentially homeless after receiving a section 21 notice from their landlord. There was uncertainty on how they would be housed once evicted. He explained the devastating impact that this had on him and his family, which had been compounded by the actions of a housing officer.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing, thanked Mr Collis for his courage in attending and speaking so openly. He explained that because of the housing crisis there were currently 315 families in temporary accommodation of which seventy-four were in bed and breakfast accommodation. A small number of these were outside the city, in either Clacton or Ipswich. This was an appalling situation that was being driven by section 21 evictions. The government had promised to take action to ban these but this was yet to happen. The Council was doing all it could to address the situation and alleviate these problems. The key to the solution was more affordable rental properties. The Council had built the first council housing for a generation but it was appreciated that the numbers built did not meet the demand.

John Akker addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) to express concern about the decision of the Local Plan Committee to commence a call for sites. It was important to learn lessons from previous Local Plan processes, especially in terms of public participation and maintaining public support. It was appreciated that more housing needed to be built but it was important that they were right homes in the right place with the right infrastructure, The call for sites was premature, given that the current plan ran to 2033. The public were not prepared for this and were suffering from the lack of infrastructure. A proper audit of infrastructure needed to be undertaken before a call for sites was undertaken.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability, responded and expressed some sympathy with the view that the call for sites was premature. Progress on the completion of the infrastructure audit had been slower than hoped for. However the call for sites was a matter for the Local Plan Committee. The Council was required to review the Local Plan every five years and the deadline was approaching so the Committee was correct in beginning the review process.

Mrs Spantidaki addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1). She did not believe that Community 360 were a suitable organisation to be located in a Church. She raised concerns about the way her reports of suspicious behaviour by an armed man, which she had raised at Council in December 2018, had been dealt with by the Zones Teams and the police. She also expressed concern about how the Zones Teams dealt with the street homeless and their belongings. For example, a bible belonging to a homeless individual had been disposed of.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, responded and indicated he was aware of the issues raised about the treatment of the belongings of homeless people. The Zone Wardens did take care in their dealings with homeless individuals. However where belongings appeared to be abandoned, they would be disposed of as residents expected that the city centre would be kept clean. It was understood that the missing bible had been found but it had not been claimed. In terms of the police matters, this would be followed up if further details were provided.

#### **636 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Council)**

*RESOLVED* that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023 and 13 September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### **637 Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor invited Council to reflect in silence on the recent events in the Middle East and Ukraine. The Council had a duty to be balanced and thoughtful and to look at the tragedy that was being inflicted on people on all sides.

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Appleton to Council following his election in the recent Highwoods by-election.

**638 Adoption of the Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan**

**Councillor Jay (in respect of her position as Chair of Myland Community Council) declared a registerable interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 9(5).**

*RESOLVED (UNANIMOUS)* that the Copford and Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan be made (adopted) following receipt of the Examiner's report.

**639 Adoption of the Myland and Braiswick Neighbourhood Plan (Reviewed 2022-2023)**

*RESOLVED (UNANIMOUS)* that the Myland and Braiswick Neighbourhood Plan (reviewed 2022-23) be made (adopted) following receipt of the Examiner's report.

**640 Treatment of War Pensions in the Calculation of Housing Benefit**

*RESOLVED (UNANIMOUS)* that the recommendation contained in minute 779 of the Cabinet meeting of 6 September 2023 be approved and adopted.

**641 2022-23 Year End Review of Risk Management**

*RESOLVED (UNANIMOUS)* that the recommendation contained in minute 781 of the Cabinet meeting of 6 September 2023 be approved and adopted.

**642 Mid Year Capital Programme Updates 2023**

**Councillor Warnes (in respect of his position as Chair of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd) and Councillor Mannion (in respect of his position as a Board member of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd) declared a registerable interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 9(5).**

*RESOLVED (NINETEEN voted FOR, SIXTEEN voted AGAINST and SIX ABSTAINED from voting)* that the recommendation contained in draft minute 791 of the Cabinet meeting of 11 October 2023 be approved and adopted.

## 643 Non-Disposable Single Use Vapes

It was proposed by Councillor Goss that:-

*Council notes*

(a) *the serious harm and risk that non-disposable single use vapes are causing to our environment, our wildlife, our children and all users;*

(b) *the risk to our refuse collectors due to refuse lorries catching fire as a result of the battery elements within vapes;*

(c) *that as shown by figures provided by Greenpeace two disposable single use vapes are thrown away every second in the UK – 1.3 million a week presenting a considerable risk and harm to all of us;*

*Council also raises concern at the harm to young people due to the promotion of vapes which can be displayed near sweets and confectionary and notes incidents of young people being rushed to hospital due to indoctrinated vapes;*

*Council believes that the local environment and our young people deserve the highest possible protection;*

*Council requests that representation is made to Government through the local MPs for Colchester by Council writing to them requesting them to bring in urgent legislation without delay, to join over forty other countries that have already banned vapes in some way to:*

1. *Ban the sale of non-disposable single use vapes;*
2. *Ban open display of vapes and to treat sales in the same manner as cigarettes;*  
*and*
3. *Bring in a programme of awareness amongst schoolchildren.*

Councillor Rowe proposed the following main amendment:-

*That the motion on Non-Disposable Single Use Vapes be approved and adopted subject to the following amendment:-*

*The addition of the following sentence at the end of the motion:-*

*“Noting that the current legislation permits a local authority to restrict vaping activities*

*under the terms of a Public Space Protection Order, Council informs Cabinet of its opinion that it should explore the current public appetite of residents of the City for the prohibition of single use vapes within Colchester's Public Space Protection Order."*

Councillor Goss indicated that the main amendment was not accepted and Council debated the motion and main amendment. On being put to the vote the main was amendment was lost (SIXTEEN voted FOR, TWENTY THREE voted AGAINST and TWO ABSTAINED from voting).

On being to the vote the motion was approved and adopted (UNANIMOUS).

#### **644 Transparency**

**Councillor Bentley (in respect of his position as senior Vice Chair of the Local Government Association) declared a registerable interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 9(5).**

It was proposed by Councillor Sunnucks that:-

*This Council believes that full transparency is in the interests of those we represent and leads to better decision making on their behalf. It therefore resolves that all data held and managed by the Council should be made publicly available upon request unless it relates to specific private individuals or current commercially sensitive contract negotiations: and that the 2015 Local Government Transparency Code should be respected in full.*

Councillor King proposed a main amendment as follows:-

*The motion on transparency be approved and adopted subject to the following amendments:*

*In the first sentence:-*

- *The deletion of the words "believes that full" and the insertion of the word "welcomes;"*
- *After the word "transparency" the addition of the words "as it."*

*In the second sentence:-*

- *After the words "publicly available upon " the deletion of the word "request" and the insertion of the words "reasonable request as soon as practical."*
- *The deletion of the words " and that the 2015 Local Government Transparency Code should be respected in full"*



*The insertion of a third sentence:-*

*“In accord with the 2015 Local Government Transparency Code”.*

Councillor Sunnucks indicated that the main amendment was accepted and the motion was deemed amended accordingly. The revised wording of the motion was as follows:-

*This Council welcomes transparency as it is in the interests of those we represent and leads to better decision making on their behalf. It therefore resolves that all data held and managed by the Council should be made publicly available upon reasonable request as soon as practical unless it relates to specific private individuals or current commercially sensitive contract negotiations. In accord with the 2015 Local Government Transparency Code.*

On being put to the vote the motion was approved and adopted (UNANIMOUS).

## **645 Climate Emergency**

**Councillor Bentley (in respect of his position as Leader of Essex County Council) declared a registerable interest in this following pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 9(5).**

Rachel Matthews addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1). She explained that she had been evangelical about renewable energy until she had researched the issue properly, when she had found that so called green initiatives were environmentally disastrous. She had been shocked by the attitude of the Council when concerns were raised over highly polluting products, their inability to be recycled, the child slave labour involved and the risk to the public from EVs exploding. Most solar panels were made in China often using slave labour, with processes that involved the burning of coal. In the USA 50 million solar panels a year were installed, generating a million metric tonnes of hazardous waste which was not cost effective to recycle. Wind turbines required a colossal amount of energy and resources to manufacture, relied on diesel oil for their operation and were not readily recyclable. Concerns about the environmental impact of lithium batteries for solar storage had already been raised with Environment and Sustainability Panel. Lithium mining generated huge quantities of hazardous waste creating long lasting pollution. The mining of cobalt involved the use of child labour in hazardous conditions. Even after this had been raised with the Council, it had still procured 100 e-bikes and an order had been placed for electric road sweepers. This was contrary to the Council's anti-slavery policy. These were not teething problems of new technology but fundamental flaws which could not be ignored. It was concerning that the Council was pushing for the government to go further. The Council should demand that the

government should not deploy any technology that badly pollutes and cannot easily be recycled. The biggest threat to survival was not the weather but people blindly following orders without question or thought.

Carinna Cooper addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) and asked if Council was aware of the measures Parliament considered necessary to fully meet net zero obligations by 2050 or the contents of the Absolute Zero report agreed in the House of Lords. This included measures such as the closure of airports, cessation of shipping, fertiliser use restricted and the replacement of gas boilers and fires with ineffective heat pumps. Would residents be able to afford these measures and what impact would the measures on food have on the population's health? Had Council studied the full data produced by the IPCC and was anyone in the Council qualified to analyse the data and declare a climate emergency, especially given that the IPCC and central government had not declared one. Council should make decisions based on facts rather than fear. Central government was influenced heavily by the corporate world who benefitted from net zero. Communities relied on the honesty and integrity of local representatives to ensure the public were protected from corporate greed and from agendas that did not serve the public interest. Proper expert advice was needed. Council was offered the opportunity to have at least two experienced UN accredited climatologists to come to Colchester and speak at a public meeting. This would enable the Council to have an open discussion with the public and secure their agreement. Attempting to force draconian measures on people would backfire as was shown by destruction of Ultra Low Emission Zones and 20mph road signs. The Council should set a date for such a public meeting.

Cheryl Taylor addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) to ask whether the Council was intending to have more 20 mph zones in Colchester. According to the 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report there was no issue with air pollution for so long that it had recommended revoking Air Quality Management Area status. There was only marginal air quality exceedance. Was there evidence to suggest that slowing journey times by a third or more improves air quality.? Whilst some car emissions would be lower in 20mph areas, journeys would take longer to complete leading to an overall increase in particulates. It was also likely to cause a backlog of traffic at peak times and cause congestion in areas which were not in the 20mph zones. Whilst 20mph zones were rational outside schools and playgrounds for safety reasons, elsewhere there was evidence that such zones increased the risk of accidents due to driver frustration and carelessness. Data from the Institute of Advanced Motorists showed a 26% increase in serious accidents in 20mph areas and they had called for government and Councils to take stock of the effectiveness of 20mph signage. Recent research by Bath Council raised concerns about the consequences of 20 mph zones which had been associated with increased fatalities and injuries. The report questioned the continuation of the programme and recommended against expanding area based schemes. It had admitted it could not afford to scrap the schemes which had cost £871,000 to implement. Colchester should learn from these mistakes.

Luke Peatling addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) about Parliament's ability to set legally binding obligations on net zero. The Bill of Rights was created in 1688 to protect rights following the installation of William of Orange as king. This established control of the monarchy by Parliament but stated that Parliament could do nothing that would harm the people. The Bill of Rights remains as the basis of the Constitution. It enforces the rule of law and stipulates that the government cannot oppress its citizens and all decisions must promote the welfare of the people. Parliament's role under the Bill of Rights is to meet and resolve the people's grievances. Contrary to popular belief, Parliament has no authority to make law. Law was made by the people and it was Parliament's role to legislate to implement that law rather create it itself. The Bill of Rights could not be undone and it went hand in hand with the coronation oath. Anything that prejudices the people was therefore unlawful. Therefore there was no requirement to do what Parliament says. Legally binding decisions did not bind anyone except the parties to the agreement.

It was proposed by Councillor Nissen that:-

*This Council notes:*

1. *2023 was one of the hottest summers since records began in 1880, with heat records being broken and extreme weather across Europe. The climate emergency remains the biggest threat to Colchester, with impacts on all aspects of life including health and finances.*
2. *The world is considered to be in climate breakdown by the United Nations, and efforts to reverse the 1.5°C rise have not been implemented. New fossil fuel exploration is contradictory to the Paris Agreement and an existential threat to our survival.*
3. *Poorly insulated homes comprise a very high percentage of Colchester's housing emissions, with an additional economic impact on residents squeezed by the cost of living. 61.9% of homes have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of D or below, indicating a large proportion of homes in Colchester are poorly insulated, impacting on the ability for residents to pay bills in a cost of living crisis. Colchester City Council has had successes within our social housing portfolio, by raising 85% of our homes to C rating; showing our commitments to both supporting vulnerable residents with financial hardship and mitigating the climate emergency.*
4. *Over 300 Councils have declared a climate emergency. To support them in delivering critical climate actions, central government needs to urgently increase funding to local authorities, under the National Adaptation Programme.*
5. *Investment in Green energy would create jobs, tackle unemployment and reduce the cost of living. It would go a way to mitigating both extreme heat and flash flooding, for which Colchester is vulnerable.*

*This Council calls on the UK Government to:*

1. *Implement necessary measures to ensure the UK meets its legally binding obligations to net zero by 2050; and consider committing to the internationally-recommended 2030 goal;*
2. *Provide enhanced funding from the Energy Profit Levy, to support a long-term investment programme on retrofitting poor insulated homes and local authority buildings;*
3. *Re-commit to the ban on oil, LPG and new coal heating for off-gas-grid homes by 2026;*
4. *Promote the deployment of low carbon electricity types including solar, wind, hydropower;*
5. *Support 20 mph in highly urban areas, assisting councils to actively improve air quality;*
6. *Promote and fund Active Travel schemes which work in collaboration with existing infrastructure; including long-term support for successful initiatives including £2 bus travel.*

A main amendment was moved by Councillor Goacher as follows:-

*The motion on the Climate Emergency be approved and adopted subject to the following amendment:*

*The insertion of the following words at the end of the motion:-*

7. *Commit to supporting second tier authorities financially in order that they continue to subsidise rural and urban bus services wherever the ending of a route will render settlements with no daily public transport services.*
8. *Re-commit to opening up the consultation on the future homes standard (FHS) by the end of this year (2023) and to promote net zero regulations for housebuilding, including the installation of solar panels on new build homes.*
9. *Halt the planned expansion of oil and gas drilling in the North Sea and advise the North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) to cease the issuing of new licences.*

Councillor Nissen indicated that the main amendment was not accepted and Council debated the motion and main amendment. On being put to the vote the main amendment was lost (MAJORITY voted AGAINST).

On being put to the vote the motion was approved and adopted (TWENTY FIVE voted FOR and SEVENTEEN voted AGAINST).

**646 Revised Licensing Committee Membership**

*RESOLVED* that the recommendation contained in the report by the Monitoring Officer and Head of Governance be approved and adopted.

**647 Questions to Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 10**

Questioner	Subject	Response
Oral Questions		
Councillor Bentley	In view of the demand for wheeled bins amongst residents of Oakwood Meadows, could the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste provide an update on the Waste Review?	Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, explained that the Waste Review was being considered by the Environment and Sustainability Panel. All aspects of waste policy were being considered. It was anticipated that it would be published early in 2024. It was possible that it would include a recommendation about wheeled bins. The forthcoming changes to the garden waste service would also increase the usage of wheeled bins across Colchester.
Councillor Laws	Would the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage be willing to meet him to discuss how the 30 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Blur's "Parklife" album could be marked?	Councillor Burrows, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage indicated she would be willing to meet to discuss this issue.
Councillor Hagon	Could the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste review the policy on cutting verges as the current practice often led to grass of different lengths in the same area which was unsightly.	Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste explained that he raised this issue when he met Idverde recently. The gap between the areas being mowed and the verges strimmed was normally about two weeks but they had been asked to close the gap. Where there were obstacles such as bollards

		strimming was conducted more infrequently. Idverde were being encouraged to take a more innovative approach to their work.
Councillor Scordis	Would the Portfolio Holder Neighbourhood Services and Waste consider amending the garden waste scheme so that the residents could pay a reduced amount to be included within the scheme for part of the year? This might increase the take up of the scheme.	<p>Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste explained that this would not be possible as the scheme would be launched in November and it was too late to amend the scheme. This had not been raised as a suggestion at Scrutiny Panel, nor had it been raised at the monthly briefing meetings.</p> <p>The scheme provided support for those on low incomes and was flexible. It allowed residents to share a wheeled bin or to have a smaller wheeled bin. Further consideration was being given to different payment options. It was anticipated the scheme would outperform initial expectations and it would be reviewed in the light of experience once it had bedded in.</p>
Councillor Smalls	The issue of how residents in terraced housing without side access would manage a wheeled bin had been raised at Scrutiny Panel. This remained a concern and had been raised at Rowhedge Parish Council. Did the advice remain that residents should wheel the bin through their house or would an alternative be provided for those without side access?	<p>Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste explained that 83% of Councils had wheeled bins and had been able to make these schemes work with similar housing stock. The Council was not able to put new entrances into existing housing. There was an onus on residents to be responsible and to make the scheme work. Smaller wheeled bins would be available and residents could share with neighbours. Consideration also needed to be given to health and</p>

		safety of Council staff and on that basis white hessian sacks would not be provided. These were also difficult to dispose of. The Council had sought to be as innovative and flexible as it could in the scheme.
Councillor MacLean	Would the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste meet with him and ward colleagues to discuss how residents of New Town and Christ Church who lived in housing where wheeled bins were inappropriate could take part in the scheme.	Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste indicated that he would be happy to meet but his previous answer had set out the position on this issue.
Councillor Lissimore	Could the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste explain why roads had not been swept as had been promised and when the service would resume?	Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste explained that there had been some operational issues with the smaller road sweeping machines. These were serviced by Riverside and were proving complex to repair and there were supply issues with parts. Going forward, consideration was being given to changing the servicing arrangements and doing this through the manufacturer but this was likely to be more expensive. There would be contractual issues with Riverside. A further machine was being procured for sweeping leaves.
Councillor Warnes	Could the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste explain what plans were in place to raise awareness of home composting?	Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste explained that home composting was one of the options available to those who did not wish to take part in the garden waste scheme. There would be an option to purchase a home composting


		bin at 50% discount as part of the scheme together with advice on how to compost. Education on composting was a key element of the scheme.
Councillor Dundas	Could the Portfolio Holder for Resources provide an estimate of the lost income from the closure of the Moot Hall, on the basis it did not reopen until 2026?	Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, explained that Colchester Events Company were assessing the impact of the closure. Whilst there would be lost income he was not able to confirm exactly what this would be at this stage.
Councillor Dundas	Could the Portfolio Holder for Housing address the allegation of a “rogue” Housing Officer made during the Have Your Say contributions earlier in the meeting?	Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder indicated that he would ensure the allegation was investigated.

## 648 Schedule of Portfolio Decisions

RESOLVED that the schedule of Portfolio Holder decisions covering the period 8 July 2023 – 6 October 2023 be noted.



**7 December 2023**

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Andrew Weavers</b>  <b>282213</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Electoral Review of the City of Colchester</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	All		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report requests Full Council to approve the submission of an evidence base document to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the first phase of the electoral review of the City of Colchester.

## 2. Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 To approve the submission of the evidence base document attached to this report to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
- 2.2 To note that the Council's political groups will be making their own submissions on council size to the Commission.
- 2.3 The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer be delegated to make any necessary changes to the evidence base document following its submission to the Commission following consultation with the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders.

## 3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body responsible for determining the electoral arrangements of local authorities across England. Each year, the Commission calculates the level of electoral inequality arising in each local authority area to establish whether there is a need for an electoral review.
- 3.2 Electoral inequality arises if electors are either over or under-represented by their councillor(s) when compared with average levels of representation across the authority. Under the criteria adopted by the Commission, either of the following conditions are considered to warrant a review if the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period:
- Any local authority with an electoral division or ward that has an electoral variance of 30% or over. This mean a division or ward having 30% more or fewer electors per councillor than is average for the council as a whole.
  - Any local authority where more than 30% of divisions or wards have an electoral variance of over 10% from the average for that authority.
- 3.3 In October 2022 the Commission wrote to the City Council stating that the electoral data supplied to the Commission (on 1 December 2021) indicated that:
- 6 of the 17 (35%) electoral wards had a variance of greater than 10%
  - One of the electoral wards had a variance of over 30%

and accordingly, the Commission would be commencing an electoral review of the City of Colchester in 2023. The proposals contained in the last review of Colchester came into effect in May 2016.

- 3.4 The first stage of an electoral review is for the Commission to invite the Authority and its political groups to agree proposals regarding Council size. This comprises the number of councillors to be elected to the Council. For Colchester this is currently 51 councillors. This figure was agreed by the Commission as part of the previous electoral review and was reduction from 60. The size of the Council must be divisible by 3 to reflect the fact that the Council elects by thirds.
- 3.5 The Commission's Council Size Submission Guidance states that broadly speaking a view will be taken on council size for an Authority by considering three areas:
- **Strategic Leadership** – how many councillors are needed to give strategic leadership and direction to the Authority?
  - **Accountability**
    - Scrutiny – how many councillors are needed to provide scrutiny to the Authority?
    - Regulatory – how many councillors are needed to meet the regulatory requirements of the Authority?
    - Partnerships – how many councillors are required to manage partnerships between the local authority and other organisations?
  - **Community Leadership** – how the representational role of councillors in the local community is discharged and how they engage with people and conduct casework.
- 3.6 The Commission aims to ensure that its recommendations remain relevant for the long term and will recommend a number that delivers effective and convenient local government well after the completion of the review.
- 3.7 The areas mentioned above are addressed in the completed evidence base document attached to this report which is a Commission template. This document has been informed by:
- Briefings given by the Commission to all Councillors, Group Leaders and officers;
  - Meetings with Group Leaders; and
  - Feedback from a Councillor survey.
- 3.8 Discussions have been on-going between the political groups on Council size, but no consensus has been possible. Consequently, Full Council is not being requested to agree a council size submission on behalf of the Authority, instead each of the political groups will make their own submission to the Commission on council size.
- 3.9 The Council Size Submission is required to be evidence based and the attached document provides evidence in response to the issues relating to governance which the Commission will consider as part of the review.

3.10 The second stage of the review will be a public consultative process by the Commission regarding proposed warding patterns. This will commence in June 2024 and which will result in whole council elections in May 2026 on the revised warding pattern.

#### **4. Proposals**

4.1 That the attached evidence base document be agreed and submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

4.2 If following the documents' submission to the Commission any amendments are required the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer be delegated to make any necessary amendments following consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Group Leaders.

#### **5. Strategic Plan References**

5.1 The electoral review forms part of the council's governance arrangements which in turn forms parts of the Council's commitment to delivering modern services for a modern city which underpins the Council's Strategic Plan vision.

#### **6. Publicity Considerations**

6.1 Details of the review process will be published both on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and the Council's websites.

#### **7. Consultation Considerations**

7.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England will, as part of the second phase of the review undertake a formal consultation with the public and stakeholders regarding warding patterns which will commence in June 2024.

#### **8. Financial, Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management, Equality, Diversity, Human Rights and Environment and Sustainability Implications**

8.1 No direct implications.



# Council Size Submission

Colchester City Council

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## How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

## About You

The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, a resident group, or an individual.

Colchester City Council – approved by Full Council 7 December 2023

## Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Please explain the authority's reasons for requesting this electoral review; it is useful for the Commission to have context. *NB/ If the Commission has identified the authority for review under one of its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

## Identified by the Commission

## The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?
- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

Colchester City Council has operated the Cabinet and Leader model of governance since 2001 and is kept under review. There is no desire to change the model of governance, as it has operated effectively and efficiently and has provided transparent and stable administrations.

The former Borough underwent an Electoral review by the Commission in 2015. Prior to this, the Council was made up of 60 Councillors, representing 27 wards of varying sizes. There were a number of 1 and 2 member wards. The review resulted in a reduction to 51 Councillors representing 17 wards each with 3 members. The new Council came into being following whole council elections on 5 May 2016.

No governance or capacity issues have been raised by any Inspectorate. The Council underwent an LGA Peer Review in September 2022. A copy of the report of the Peer Review is [here](#). The Peer Review highlighted that:-



- With the opportunities afforded by their plans for growth, the new Member and Officer Leadership team and, most crucially, city status, the City Council and Colchester, the place is on the cusp of something great.
- Colchester City Council has good self-awareness and understands the communities it serves and the economy across the borough.
- Colchester has an incredible heritage and culture offer that competes nationally and Colchester City Council has worked hard over the years to develop resilient and productive relationships and partnerships to ensure this heritage and cultural offer can thrive.
- Colchester City Council is driven and has a strong desire for achievement and delivery, with fantastic people, including staff, councillors, and partners.

The Peer Review made the following recommendations: -

1. Focus on city status. Use this as an opportunity to galvanise partners, improve the borough's economic and cultural strength and raise the voice of Colchester;
2. Get a firmer grip on the capital programme – manage all risks and improve your planning to ensure you have appropriate strategic finance, programme and project capacity and the resources to deliver;
3. Co-design a compelling and longer-term place-based narrative/city vision to define Colchester for the future;
4. Strengthen your political and officer 'leaders of place' roles and look beyond Colchester – map your anchor institutions, partners and stakeholders;
5. Review your priorities and projects and refocus on delivering 'Brilliant Business As Usual' and strengthen your corporate resources;
6. Strongly consider whether changing your election cycle will help you achieve your goals, ambitions and deliver improved services for Colchester's communities;
7. Better define with your staff what 'hybrid working' means for CBC and provide a clear definition. Also, clarify how the new CBC values will be designed and embedded, communicating to staff how these define the Council and will help achieve Colchester's ambition; and,
8. Commission an independent review of Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd, and its subsidiaries, also undertake an internal review of Colchester Borough Homes to assess whether the companies are realising the benefits they were established to deliver.

In terms of the electoral cycle, the Council formed an all-party Working Group to consider alternative electoral arrangements. This recommended that consideration of changing the Council’s electoral arrangements be deferred until the electoral review of Colchester was completed and implemented in 2026. This recommendation was accepted by Full Council at its meeting on 22 February 2023.

The Peer Review Team undertook a progress review in July 2023 and reported that significant progress had been made against the recommendations made by the Peer Review. The report of the progress review is [here](#).

Colchester City Council is actively involved in ongoing discussions about devolution in Essex. It is understood that work is progressing towards a Level 2 devolution deal. This would establish a Greater Essex Combined Authority which would see Essex County Council and the unitary authorities of Southend and Thurrock working together on issues relating to skills, transport planning and the functions of the Local Enterprise Partnership. Colchester City Council would look to make its influence felt on any discussions on devolution.

The overall number of formal meetings of the Council Committee and Panels has been increasing over recent years. The table below sets out the figures for total number of formal meetings of the Committees and Panels over recent years.

	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-34 (Meetings to date and those currently scheduled)
Total number of meetings	71	65	72	78	89	80

No recommendation is being made by the Authority regarding Council size. Individual political groups will be making their own submissions on Council size.

## Local Authority Profile

**Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics.** This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of “hidden” or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

Colchester was awarded City Status by her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in 2022 as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and officially became a city on 23 November 2022 when the Letters Patent conferring city status were received by the Full Council.

The City of Colchester covers an area of 324 square kilometres in northeast Essex. It borders Suffolk in the north, along with three Essex Districts – Tendring to the east, Maldon to the southwest and Braintree to the west. It has a significant coastline. At its core is the historic city centre which is surrounded by villages and smaller towns of distinct and complementary character. It includes part of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The largest towns are Wivenhoe and West Mersea. The island of Mersea is at the south of the city and forms the city’s principal coastal area. The city centre of Colchester, broadly defined as the area within the Roman city walls is a focal point for the whole city – containing one of the East of England’ busiest shopping destinations, as well as nationally important heritage, including Colchester Castle, several Arts Council England National Partner Organisations and other cultural and leisure attractions.

Colchester hosts the University of Essex with 17,000 students, predicted to grow to 25,000 in 10 years. It is one of the leading research institutions in the country. Colchester also hosts a garrison and is home to 16 Air Assault Brigade.

Colchester continues to grow in popularity as a place to live and work. The city’s current population is 192,700, an increase of 11.3% from 173000 in 2011 (ONS, 2022). With an estimated number of households of 79,300 it is home to 13% of Essex’s population making it the largest

district in the county (ONS, 2021). Colchester is growing at a faster rate than the rest of Essex and its population is expected to grow to 225,200 people by 2031 (East of England Forecasting Model 2021) an increase of 17% on the current level.

Colchester is currently the third largest district council in England (ONS). Since 2011, Colchester has seen significant growth in younger age groups, particularly people in their 20s (ONS). Additionally, in 2020 17.2% of people in Colchester were of retirement age (ONS). Colchester's population is rapidly becoming more diverse, with an increase in ethnic minority residents from 7.9% in 2009 to 8% in 2020.

Colchester has a thriving economy with a diverse range of 8750 businesses worth an estimated Gross Value Added of £4.43 bn. Key growth sectors for Colchester include tourism, care, construction, green energy and creative, digital and tech enabled by the significant investment in ultrafast gigabit broadband. Colchester attracts a significant number of workers from outside the city and is an employment hub for North Essex and South Suffolk.

Recent years have seen an estimated £634m investment which have transformed the experience of the town: including new hotels, visitor attractions, new spaces for businesses, improved retail, new sport and leisure facilities, expansion of the University of Essex, cutting-edge connectivity and town centre regeneration. These investments are just beginning to bear fruit - driving employment, transferable skills, new business opportunities and creating a new, contemporary tourism image for Colchester to complement its historic reputation.

The City is partly parished with 29 parish, town and community councils.

### Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role.

These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.** Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

### Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i></li> </ul>
Governance Model	Analysis	<p>The Council comprises 51 Councillors, who are elected by thirds. The current political balance on the Council is:</p> <p>Conservative 19  Liberal Democrat 16  Labour 14  Green 2</p> <p>The Council is run by a minority Liberal Democrat administration, with support on a supply and confidence arrangement from the Labour group.</p> <p>Colchester City Council operates a Strong Leader/Cabinet system. This is well established and there is no desire across the political spectrum to change to a Committee system.</p> <p>The current Cabinet is made up of eight Councillors and this has been the case in most administrations in recent years, except 2021/22 when the Cabinet was made up of six members. The precise responsibilities and titles of the Portfolios change over time to reflect political priorities and pressures.</p>

		<p>Major strategic and operational policies are approved by Cabinet, and if they are part of the Policy Framework are adopted by Full Council. There is a culture of seeking wider members views before major strategic decisions are taken. It is common for major policies to be subject to pre-scrutiny by the Scrutiny Panel and/or to be considered by the Policy Panel or Environment and Sustainability Panel whilst policy is developed. As a consequence, the demands made on members of the Committees and Panels are growing.</p> <p>There is also a programme of member briefings which often inform members of major policies as they are developed and in particular a programme of budget workshops which are used to seek member views and give members an opportunity to influence the budget as it is developed.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Council will seek to maintain a Strong Leader/Cabinet model. It is felt that this provides the ability for transparent, effective and quick decision making. As operated in Colchester, there is the ability for other Committees and Panels to make a meaningful contribution to major policy and operational decisions in a constructive way. The ability to call in decisions, whilst used rarely, provides a balance to power of the executive and ensures that Cabinet engages with scrutiny processes.</p> <p>Cabinet works closely with Senior Leadership Board (SLB), which provides the strategic management of the Council and monitors its strategic performance. Cabinet members meet with the SLB every two weeks in Leadership Board meetings. The officers who comprise SLB are as follows: -  Chief Executive  Chief Operating Officer  Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director Place  Strategic Director (x 3)  A wider Senior Leadership Team comprises SLB and Heads of Service.</p>
<b>Portfolios</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i></li> </ul>

	Analysis	<p>There are currently eight members of the Cabinet, The current portfolios are as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Portfolio Holder for Strategy (held by the Leader of the Council)</li> <li>Communities</li> <li>Economy, Performance and Transformation</li> <li>Housing</li> <li>Leisure, Culture and Heritage</li> <li>Neighbourhoods and Waste</li> <li>Planning, Environment and Sustainability</li> <li>Resources (held by the Deputy Leader of the Council).</li> </ul> <p>The current scheme of delegation to Cabinet members showing the responsibilities is <a href="#">here</a>. All portfolios are considered to be full portfolios with broadly similar workloads and areas of responsibility.</p> <p>The scheme of delegation sets out those areas and responsibilities which the Leader of the Council has delegated to individual portfolio holders. Portfolio holders are encouraged to take decisions under delegated powers outside of formal Cabinet meetings and there is a clear process for such decisions., although the number of decisions taken across portfolios can vary widely.</p> <p>Cabinet posts are demanding and busy roles. Cabinet meets 7-8 times a year to take formal decisions, with meetings lasting approximately two hours, and with a coordinating meeting to help set the agenda before each meeting. Cabinet also meets with SLB every two weeks in Leadership Board meetings to formulate policy and drive the strategic direction of the Council. Cabinet members lead on their portfolios whilst also working collectively as a Cabinet. They meet with senior officers relating to their portfolios regularly in Portfolio Holder briefings. Cabinet members also represent the Council on a number of Joint Committees and outside bodies. With the growing emphasis on partnership working this element of the role is of increasing importance.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Resources in particular also routinely attend meetings of the Council's Scrutiny and Policy Panels, and Governance and Audit Committee. Some Cabinet members are also in full time employment and the working practices of the Council reflect that, with most member meetings scheduled as evening meetings.</p>
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		There have been eight portfolios in each administration in recent years, except 2021/22 when there were six. It is anticipated that going forward, the Council would require a Cabinet of eight members to successfully manage the workload of executive decision making.
<b>Delegated Responsibilities</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The principal and practice of delegating decision making and responsibilities to officers and Committees is well established. The current scheme of delegation to Cabinet members showing the responsibilities is <a href="#">here</a>. The current scheme of delegation to officers is <a href="#">here</a>. The current scheme of delegation to regulatory Committees is <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the emphasis on delegating decisions to officers where appropriate and to give considerable freedom to Cabinet members to take delegated decisions would continue.</p>

### Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
<b>Internal Scrutiny</b>	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i></li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>The Cabinet (Executive) is held to account by the Scrutiny Panel. The terms of reference of the Panel are <a href="#">here</a>. The Panel is chaired by an opposition member.</p> <p>Executive decisions are called in for review by the Scrutiny Panel relatively rarely. However, the performance of individual Portfolio Holders is reviewed by the Panel. Significant policy and operational decisions are often referred for pre-scrutiny before Cabinet, with the Panel encouraged to make recommendations to the Cabinet. This has reduced the need for call in. The Executive are keen to work in a collegiate way and are keen to consider the views of the Scrutiny Panel and would rather work constructively rather than through continual challenge.</p> <p>The Panel also meets twice a year as the Crime and Disorder Committee to meet to review or scrutinise decisions or other actions taken in connection with its functions in respect of crime and disorder.</p> <p>The Panel can also ask for items to be added to its work programme. The work programme is reviewed at each meeting. The workload of the Scrutiny Panel has increased over recent years, with a number of additional meetings being scheduled. For example, the Panel met on 12 occasions in 2022-23, which included the scheduling of 3 additional meetings.</p> <p>There has also been some crossover with the work of the Governance and Audit Committee, particularly around the scrutiny of the Council's companies and the Council has clarified the</p>

	<p>position by designating the Governance and Audit Committee as the Shareholder Committee for Council owned companies.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Panel can establish Task and Finish Groups to look at issues in greater depth and a number of Task and Finish Groups have been set up in the past. There are no current Task and Finish Groups, but the Council would want to retain this as an option going forward.</p>				
<p><b>Statutory Function</b></p>	<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>				
<p><b>Planning</b></p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="913 651 1108 986"> <p>Key lines of explanation</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1108 651 2085 986"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="913 986 1108 1396"> <p>Analysis</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1108 986 2085 1396"> <p>The Full Council has delegated its planning functions to the Planning Committee. There is a further scheme of delegation from the Planning Committee to officers which is <a href="#">here</a>. Members can also call-in planning applications so that they are considered by the Planning Committee, although valid planning reasons must be given. Under the scheme of delegation 97% of applications are determined by officers.</p> <p>Details on numbers of planning applications received over recent years are set out below: -</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Key lines of explanation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i></li> </ul>	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Full Council has delegated its planning functions to the Planning Committee. There is a further scheme of delegation from the Planning Committee to officers which is <a href="#">here</a>. Members can also call-in planning applications so that they are considered by the Planning Committee, although valid planning reasons must be given. Under the scheme of delegation 97% of applications are determined by officers.</p> <p>Details on numbers of planning applications received over recent years are set out below: -</p>
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		<p><b>2018</b>  Largescale Majors = 9  Smallscale Majors = 51  Minor = 391  Other = 1295  <b><u>Total = 1,746</u></b></p> <p><b>2019</b>  Largescale Majors = 14  Smallscale Majors = 65  Minor = 386  Other = 1267  <b><u>Total = 1,732</u></b></p> <p><b>2020</b>  Largescale Majors = 14  Smallscale Majors = 48  Minor = 331  Other = 1423  <b><u>Total = 1,816</u></b></p> <p><b>2021</b>  Largescale Majors = 12  Smallscale Majors = 44  Minor = 376  Other = 1586  <b><u>Total = 2,018</u></b></p> <p><b>2022</b>  Largescale Majors = 8  Smallscale Majors = 37  Minor = 329  Other = 1358  <b><u>Total = 1,732</u></b></p>
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		<p>There is one single Planning Committee which covers the whole City. This arrangement has worked well and it is not proposed to change to a system of Area Committees. The Planning Committee has ten members and currently meets every three weeks, although the frequency of meetings is kept under review. Members are required to undertake training before sitting on the Committee, which must be refreshed every two years. A typical agenda will have 3 items and last on average 1.5 hours. The Planning Committee will sometimes undertake site visits in advance of determining an application. These visits are usually undertaken on the afternoon before the meeting - the Committee visited 16 sites on 7 separate occasions in the 2022-23 municipal year. Membership of the Planning Committee involves a considerable time commitment.</p> <p>There is no constitutional bar to executive members sitting on Planning Committee, but it happens rarely, and no current executive member is also a member of the Planning Committee.</p>
<b>Licensing</b>	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The Licensing Committee has twelve members and has six scheduled meetings as a Full Committee per annum. However, there are normally approximately 8 meetings per annum as a Sub Committee or Panel to consider hackney carriage or alcohol licensing applications. The membership of these needs to be drawn from the full Committee. Members are also required to undertake training before sitting on Sub Committees and Panels, which must be refreshed every two years. Therefore, membership</p>

		<p>of the Licensing Committee involves a considerable time commitment.</p> <p>On occasions there has been difficulty finding sufficient members to sit on Sub Committee and Panels, given the number of hearings and members other commitments. There would be merit in having a larger Licensing Committee with a wider pool of members to draw from.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Other Regulatory Bodies</b></p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i></li> </ul>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Council's Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for the Council's regulatory functions in respect of audit, governance and standards issues. Its terms of reference are <a href="#">here</a>. In summary it considers and approves the Statement of Accounts and receives the Council's annual audit letter. It also deals with the Council's governance, risk management and audit arrangements and a number of miscellaneous regulatory matters relating to elections and Community Governance Reviews. It manages the Standards and conduct regime for members, including Hearings Sub-Committees where allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct are determined. It is also acts as the Shareholder Committee for the Council owned companies, Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited and Colchester Borough Homes Limited.</p> <p>Over recent years the workload of the Committee has increased. This is partly in response to a sharpened focus and interest in some elements of the Committee's work, particular the auditing of Council accounts and increased focus on the management and performance of the Council owned companies. The terms of the reference of the Committee have been amended to ensure a consistency of approach between the Council owned companies:</p>

		<p>Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited and Colchester Borough Homes Limited.</p> <p>This has led to an increased demand on members of the Committee and the need to schedule several additional meetings. For example, 4 additional meetings plus a Sub Committee hearing were scheduled in 2022-2023 municipal year and the Committee has already directed that a further two meetings be scheduled in the current municipal year. It is anticipated that this trend will continue and that there will be an increased workload for the Committee, which has a comparatively small membership of 7.</p>
<b>External Partnerships</b>		<p>Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.</p>
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i></li> </ul>	
Analysis	<p>The Cabinet approves the appointment of representatives to serve on external bodies and Council groups at its meeting on an annual basis at the first meeting of the municipal year. The current list of appointments can be seen <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>In total, 20 Councillors are appointed to at least one body. The majority of appointments are made to Cabinet members, and most Cabinet members are appointed to several bodies. For example, the Leader of the Council is appointed to five bodies.</p>	

	<p>Of particular significance are Joint Committees where Councillors are appointed to serve alongside representatives of other authorities to deliver a combined service or joint project. This is an increasingly common way of delivering services, and the Council makes appointments to three such Committees: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee</li><li>• Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service Joint Committee</li><li>• Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Joint Committee</li></ul> <p>With the increased emphasis on working in partnership and delivering services and major projects alongside partners, these appointments are increasingly important, and members are dedicating increasing amounts of time to these roles.</p>
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**Community Leadership**

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has conducted a survey of Members to ascertain information on workload and how they approach their representational role and how they deal with casework. The survey was completed by 29 out of the 51 members of Council. Details of the responses can be seen <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Some of the key points are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The key motivations to become a Councillor were to serve the community and to change things.</li> <li>• Councillors spend a considerable amount of time on their role each week. The most common response to each element of the role was as follows: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading reports – more than 15 hour per week</li> <li>Researching – up to 5 hours per week</li> <li>Attending Council Meetings – up to 5 hours per week</li> <li>Dealing with Casework – up to 5 hours per week</li> <li>Serving on outside bodies – up to 5 hours per week</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The most time-consuming element of the role was reading reports. 10 Councillors indicated they spent more than 15 hours per week reading reports.</li> <li>• The amount of time spent on each element of the role was broadly in line with expectations.</li> <li>• Of those Councillors who were in post before the last series of ward changes in 2016, the majority felt that the number of hours they spent on Council business since then had increased.</li> </ul>



- A significant minority also held a position as either a town/parish councillor or a county councillor and more than half were appointed to at least one outside body.
- Half of Councillors who responded held monthly surgeries. 3 Councillors indicated that they never held surgeries.
- Councillors used a wide range of methods to engage with residents. Social media ranked highly and there was widespread agreement that technology had changed the way Councillors worked. However, traditional leaflets remained the most common method.
- Facebook was by far the most used method of social media, followed by Twitter/X.
- Some of the most relevant comments made by Councillors on the impact of technology were as follows:

*The advent of E Mail and MS Teams (etc) makes it easier and quicker to both communicate with Constituents and Officers - as well as be given more work to do (!) On balance it has meant probably twice and sometimes three times as much work to do.*

*Online agendas are fantastic and useful to refer back to. Social media a huge part of resident contact.*

*I am able to do more but as a result case load has risen significantly more- it makes councillors more accessible*

- Half of Councillors who responded felt they had about as much influence as expected.
- Some of the most relevant comments made in the general comments section on workload overall are as follows:-

*The workload has increased excessively since the reduction to 51 Councillors both by making wards larger and more diverse and having fewer Councillor means more committee meetings and having to substitute more.*

*The role I currently hold is a great deal of work, its 7 days a week from early morning and often till late at night.*

*The expectations of councillors is far greater than the recompense. Facilities available should reflect the increasing requirements (ie. technology support/provision, easier access to officer resource, adequate group accommodation, facility to mingle with opposition members before meetings, free/reduced fee access to council provision in order to promote museums, sports facilities, events, etc.)*

<b>Casework</b>	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i></li> </ul>
	Analysis	<p>The Councillor survey referred to above also addressed how Councillors deal with casework. This highlighted that the majority of Councillors who responded combined taking an independent approach with seeking help from officers. Whilst officers will respond to Councillors queries on casework, there is no centralised process for dealing with Councillor casework. Issues relating to the use of technology are addressed in the previous answer.</p> <p>Residents are encouraged to contact the Council direct with queries and problems and there is a central customer service team.</p>

### Other Issues

Respondent may use this space to bring any other issues of relevance to the attention of the Commission.

### New Technology

- Increasing ease for constituents and public to contact Councillors, through email / social media, and expect an immediate response
- Ease for officers to contact Lead Councillors (and vice versa)
- Greater openness, accountability and challenge, also promoted by Freedom of Information Act, and blogsites

## Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

- 1) Colchester City Council currently has 51 Councillors, representing 17 wards. It wishes to continue to be elected by thirds. It has therefore looked at options for size that are divisible by three – i.e., 45, 51 and 54 but the political groups were unable to reach a consensus.
- 2) Councillors from all parties are actively involved in decision making. Currently 65% of all Councillors are in receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances as Cabinet Members, chairs, vice chairs or members of regulatory committees, to recognise the extra work requirement for these roles.
- 3) Around half of all Councillors hold positions which receive Special Responsibility Allowance. There is a need for capacity and time to support making an effective balance between leadership and ward responsibilities, including having a balance within wards between back-benchers and councillors with recognised roles in the decision-making process.
- 4) In addition, as a long-standing arrangement, the Council supports and participates in a broad range of community and partnership bodies.
- 5) Councillors from all groups are generally active in engaging with and representing their wards and constituents, including holding surgeries and meetings, issuing ward newsletters and running their own blogsites (independently of the City Council).
- 6) Surveys by the Independent Remuneration Panel found Councillors reporting working at least 40-60 hours a month on their range of Councillor duties. This includes active involvement in local neighbourhood forums and community hubs, as well as ward work with individual constituents. In 2021 a survey by the Independent Remuneration Panel found that the work profile of Councillors had changed with a great increase in online communications such as social media, making elected councillors more directly accountable to and contactable by their electorate, who expect responses by return.



**7 December 2023**

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Andrew Weavers</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Appointment of Temporary Parish Councillors</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	Rural North		

**1. Executive Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to make an Order under Section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 to appoint temporary Parish Councillors to Wakes Colne Parish Council.

**2. Recommended Decisions**

2.1 To make the Order attached at Appendix 1 to appoint temporary Parish Councillors to Wakes Colne Parish Council to ensure that the Parish Council is quorate and can continue to act.

**3. Background Information**

3.1 A Town or Parish Council must be quorate in order to operate. A quorate is defined as being one third of its membership, but no less than three.

3.3 Wakes Colne Parish Council comprises seven councillors. Parish Council elections were due to be held on 4 May 2023. Only four nominations were received and were accordingly deemed elected with three vacancies remaining to which the Parish Council could co-opt. In the last week three of the newly elected councillors resigned thereby making the Parish Council inquorate. At the point a Parish Council becomes inquorate, it is unable to hold meetings and make any decisions on the business of the Parish Council. In such circumstances the City Council in accordance with Section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 can appoint individuals to act as Parish Councillors, until or unless the Parish Council has held an election or co-opted sufficient Councillors on to the Parish Council in order for it to be quorate.

3.4 It is usual practice in these circumstances for the District Council concerned to appoint the ward councillors for the area in which the Parish Council is situated. In this instance Wakes Colne is within the Rural North ward and the three Councillors from that ward have agreed to act on a temporary basis. Section 91(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the City Council to make a formal Order which is attached to this report at Appendix 1 and also to inform the Secretary of State of the appointments.

**5. Publicity Considerations**

5.1 The appointment of the temporary councillors will be notified to the Parish Council who accordingly publicise the appointments.

**6. Strategic Plan, Consultation, Financial, Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management, Equality, Diversity, Human Rights and Environment and Sustainability Implications**

6.1 No direct implications.

**Order made under Section 91(1) of Local Government Act 1972  
Wakes Colne Parish Council (Temporary Appointment of Members) Order 2023**

THIS ORDER is made the        day of                    two thousand and twenty-three by  
COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL of Town hall, High Street, Colchester CO1 1FR (“the City  
Council”)

WHEREAS:

- (a) Following the resignation of three members to Wakes Colne Parish Council, three councillors are required to give a minimum number required for a quorum.
- (b) Under section 91(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 where there are so many vacancies in the office of Parish Councillor that the Parish Council is no longer able to act Colchester City Council may, by order, appoint persons to fill all or any of the vacancies until other councillors are elected to take office.

Now in pursuance of the power conferred upon it by Section 91(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 the City Council hereby appoints the following persons to act as Members of Wakes Colne Parish Council until an election has been held and to fill such vacancies as shall constitute and re-establish a quorum in the respective Parish Council whereupon such appointments and this Order shall cease.

1. Darius Laws c/o Town Hall, High Street, Colchester, CO1 1FR
2. Thomas Rowe c/o Town Hall, High Street, Colchester, CO1 1FR
3. William Sunnucks c/o Town Hall, High Street, Colchester, CO1 1FR

The Common Seal of  
Colchester City Council  
was hereunto affixed in the presence of:

Authorised Signatory

**Extract from the draft minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 22 November 2023**

**806. Nomination for Appointment of Deputy Mayor 2024-25**

Consideration was given to the nomination for the appointment of the Deputy Mayor of the City of Colchester for the 2024-25 municipal year.

The Monitoring Officer advised Cabinet that the convention was that the nomination for Deputy Mayor was made by each of the main political groups in turn. As the Mayor was a Conservative appointment and the Deputy Mayor was a Liberal Democrat appointment, it was for the Labour Group to nominate the Deputy Mayor for the 2024-25 municipal year. The Labour Group had nominated Councillor Mike Lilley, who had fourteen years' service. The nomination was supported by all political groups.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, expressed their support for Councillor Lilley's nomination.

*RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL* that Councillor Lilley be appointed as the Deputy Mayor of the City of Colchester for the 2024-25 municipal year.





<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Richard Clifford</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Parental Leave Policy for Councillors</b>		<b>☎ 507832</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards		

## **1. Executive Summary**

1.1 This report proposes the adoption of a parental leave policy for Councillors which covers the arrangements for Councillors who may wish to take maternity or paternity leave in the period around the birth or adoption of a child. The policy sets out Councillors' entitlement to maternity, paternity shared parental and adoption leave and how this impacts on the payment of the Member Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances.

## **2. Recommended Decision**

2.1 The Parental Leave Policy at Appendix A to this report be approved and adopted and be effective from the commencement of the current municipal year.

## **3. Reason for Recommended Decision**

3.1 At present the Council does not have any policy covering the provision of maternity or paternity leave for Councillors or the payment of allowances in such circumstances. The adoption of a policy will close this gap in the Council's governance arrangements and will provide clarity to Councillors, officers and residents.

3.2 The adoption of a parental leave policy would demonstrate the Council's commitment to supporting its Councillors. Improving the provision and support for new parents may help promote a more diverse Councillor body and make public office more accessible to individuals who may otherwise feel excluded.

## **4. Alternative Options**

4.1 No alternative options are proposed.

## **5. Background Information**

5.1 At present the Council does not have any policy covering the provision of maternity or paternity leave for Councillors or the payment of allowances in such circumstances. A number of Councils are introducing such policies, and the Local Government Association has prepared a model policy for Councils to consider adopting.

5.2 The draft policy at Appendix A sets out Councillors' entitlement to maternity, paternity shared parental and adoption leave and how this impacts on the payment of the Member Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances. It has been prepared largely on the basis of the LGA's model policy, with some amendments and additions to reflect local arrangements and provide clarity on notification processes.

5.3 Key elements of the policy include:-

- Councillors giving birth are entitled to up to 6 months maternity leave from 11 weeks before the due date with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement if required, with additional provision in the case of prematurity.
- An entitlement to two weeks paternity leave.
- Councillors adopting a child through an approved adoption agency shall be entitled to take up to six months adoption leave from the date of placement, with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement if required.
- The relevant political groups and the Council will in so far as able, facilitate any arrangements made by relevant councillors which allow for the case work of a councillor on parental leave to be completed by another ward councillor or another councillor if that is not feasible.
- Councillors will continue to receive their basic allowance in full whilst on maternity, paternity or adoption leave.
- Councillors entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance shall continue to receive their allowance in full for a period of six months in the case of maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave.
- Where a replacement is appointed to cover the period of absence that person shall receive a Special Responsibility Allowance on a pro rata basis for the period of the temporary appointment, although should that person already be in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance the ordinary rules relating to payment of more than one Special Responsibility Allowances shall apply.
- Subject to some provisos, a Councillor taking leave under the policy shall return at the end of their leave period to the same post, or to an alternative post with equivalent status and remuneration which they held before the leave began.

5.4 It is important to stress that the policy does not override the legal duty in the Local Government Act 1972 for a Councillor to attend a meeting within a six month period, unless an exemption has been granted by Council.

5.5 The members of the Independent Remuneration Panel have been consulted and no concerns have been raised about the proposals in respect of the provisions on members allowances and special responsibility allowances. The Group Leaders have also been consulted and amendments suggested have been incorporated into the draft policy.

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

6.1 The adoption of a Parental Leave Policy is an important commitment to the support of Councillors and will provide clarity to Councillors and candidates about their entitlement in these circumstances. This may help attract a more diverse range of candidates in terms of gender, age and experience.

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

7.1 There are no direct links to the Strategic Plan but the introduction of policies to support Councillors and attract diverse range of candidates indirectly supports the provision of all priorities.

## **8. Consultation**

8.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Group Leaders. Where they have commented this has been broadly supportive and suggestions made have been incorporated into the draft policy.

## **9. Financial implications**

9.1 The provisions around the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances mean that in some circumstances, there will be an increased commitment as a Special Responsibility Allowance may effectively be paid twice for the same role for a period of up to six months. However, it is not anticipated that the policy will be called on extensively and the level of extra expenditure will be low in the context of the overall members allowances budget.

## **10. Standard References**

10.1 There are no particular references to; consultation or publicity considerations or community safety; health and safety, risk management or environment and sustainability implications.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft Parental Leave Policy

## **Background Papers**

[LGA Model Policy on Parental Leave](#)

## Appendix A

### Colchester City Council:- Parental Leave Policy

#### 1. Leave Periods

1.1 Councillors giving birth are entitled to up to 6 months maternity leave from 11 weeks before the due date, with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement if required.

1.2 In addition, where the birth is premature, the Councillor is entitled to take leave during the period between the date of the birth and the due date in addition to the 6 months' period. In such cases any leave taken to cover prematurity of 28 days or less shall be deducted from any extension beyond the initial 6 months.

1.3 In exceptional circumstances, and only in cases of prematurity of 29 days or more, additional leave may be taken by agreement, and such exceptional leave shall not be deducted from the total 52 week entitlement.

1.4 Councillors shall be entitled to take 2 weeks paternity leave if they are:-

- The biological father of the child;
- A Councillor who, although not the biological father of the child, is married to the child's mother or is her unmarried, cohabiting partner; or
- The cohabiting same-sex partner of the child's mother, whether or not they have registered a civil partnership.

1.5 A Councillor who has made Shared Parental Leave arrangements through their employment should advise the Council of these at the earliest possible opportunity if they wish the Council to replicate such arrangements in terms of leave from Council. The Council will make its best endeavours to replicate such arrangements.

1.6 Where both parents are Councillors leave may be shared up to a maximum of 24 weeks for the first six months and 26 weeks for any leave agreed thereafter, up to a maximum of 50 weeks. Special and exceptional arrangements may be made in cases of prematurity.

1.7 A Councillor who adopts a child through an approved adoption agency shall be entitled to take up to six months adoption leave from the date of placement, with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement if required. If both adopted parents are Councillors then only one members is entitled to take adoption leave, or an arrangement made by agreed where the leave entitlement is shared between the two Members.

1.8 Any Councillor who takes maternity, shared parental or adoption leave retains their legal duty under the Local Government Act 1972 to attend a meeting of the Council within a six month period unless the Council Meeting agrees to an extended leave of absence prior to the expiration of that six month period.

1.9 Any Councillor intending to take maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave will be responsible for ensuring that they comply with the relevant notice requirements of the Council, both in terms of the point at which the leave starts and the point at which they return.

1.10 Any Councillor taking leave should ensure that they respond to reasonable requests for information as promptly as possible, and that they keep officers and colleagues informed and updated in relation to intended dates of return and requests for extension of leave.

1.11 The relevant political groups and the Council will in so far as able, facilitate any arrangements made by relevant councillors which allow for the case work of a councillor on parental leave to be completed by another ward councillor or another councillor if that is not feasible.

1.12 The Council will ensure that the councillor on parental leave continues to have access to adequate IT provision through their period of leave and upon returning to their role.

1.13 Where under this policy agreement with the Council is specified, the Head of Governance is authorised to approve any such agreements on behalf of the Council.

## **2. Basic Allowance**

2.1 All Councillors shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full whilst on maternity, paternity or adoption leave.

## **3. Special Responsibility Allowances**

3.1 Councillors entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance shall continue to receive their allowance in full for a period of six months in the case of maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave.

3.2 Where a replacement is appointed to cover the period of absence that person shall receive an SRA on a pro rata basis for the period of the temporary appointment.

3.3 The payment of Special Responsibility Allowances, whether to the primary SRA holder or a replacement, during a period of maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave shall continue for a period of six months, or until the date of the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or until the date when the Councillor taking leave is up for election (whichever is soonest). At such a point, the position will be reviewed, and will be subject to a possible extension for a further six month period.

3.4 Should a Councillor appointed to replace the Councillor on maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave already hold a remunerated position, the ordinary rules relating to payment of more than one Special Responsibility Allowances shall apply.

3.5 Unless the Councillor taking leave is removed from their post at an Annual General Meeting of the Council whilst on leave, or unless the administration under whose leadership of the Council the Councillor was appointed loses control of the Council during their leave period, they shall return at the end of their leave period to the same post, or to an alternative post with equivalent status and remuneration which they held before the leave began.

## **4. Resigning from Office and Elections**

4.1 If a Councillor decides not to return at the end of their maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave or at any point during they must notify the Council at the earliest possible opportunity. All allowances will cease from the effective resignation date.

4.2 If an election is held during the Member's maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave and they are not re-elected, or decide not to stand for re-election, their basic allowance and SRA if appropriate will cease from the Monday after the election date when they would technically leave office.

4.3 If a Councillor resigns from office during their period or decides not to stand for re-election during that period, they shall refund to the Council any payment of Special Responsibility Allowances received during the period of their maternity, paternity, shared

parental or adoption leave.

## **5. Notification Requirements**

5.1 If a Councillor wishes to take leave under this policy, the Councillor should notify the Head Governance by email (to: [democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk)) no later than the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (maternity/paternity), intended shared parental or adoption leave or as soon as is reasonably practicable and provide:

- (i) the week the baby/child (in the case of adoption leave – date of placement) is due;
- (ii) the period of leave the councillor intends to take (or in the case of paternity leave if they wish to take one or two weeks leave); and
- (iii) when they want their leave to start,
- (iv) any arrangements made within the Political Group or with other Councillors to cover or complete the work of the Councillor through the period of leave.

This will be acknowledged within 2 weeks. An exception to this would health reasons for the mother or prematurity of the child, in which case notification is to be as soon as possible to the above email.

5.2 The Head of Governance will liaise with payroll as required regarding the payment of allowances.

5.3 If the councillor wishes to return from leave earlier than originally planned, or have a Keeping in Touch (KIT) session, they should notify the Head of Governance by email (as above), who will provide confirmation that the information has been received and from what date they will resume responsibilities of any position receiving an SRA or KIT arrangements as appropriate.

5.4 If a councillor taking leave wishes to extend this beyond 6 months (as set out in this policy) then no later than 4 weeks before the end of the 6 month period, the councillor should notify the Head of Governance in writing as above.

**Record of Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members  
7 October 2023 –27 November 2023**

<b>Portfolio – Communities</b>					
<b>Date</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Result</b>
No decisions in this period.					

<b>Portfolio – Economy, Transformation and Performance</b>					
<b>Date</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Result</b>
22 November 2023	ECO-005-23	Rural England Prosperity Fund – Business Round 1	Victoria Hanley	It is recommended that, following the proposals made by the CCC REPF Business Panel on 15 November 2023, the four projects outlined in the Decision Report are approved for funding.	Decision implemented 30 November 2023

<b>Portfolio – Housing</b>					
<b>Date</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Result</b>
17 October 2023	HOU-005-23	Award of Contract for Electrical Testing in CCC Housing Stock– Ref:034	Martin Norgett	To award a contract to Whitehall Electrical Ltd to undertake Electrical Testing within the Housing Stock for four (4) years with the option for a two (2) year extension subject to performance.	Decision implemented 31 October 2023
25 October 2023	HOU-006-23	Approval of Sale of Housing Revenue Account Garage and Driveway – 57 Rosabelle Avenue, Wivenhoe, Colchester, Essex	Suzanne Norton	To approve the recommended decision to sell a Housing Revenue Account garage and driveway to the owner of the adjoining garage.	Decision implemented 1 November 2023

**Record of Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members  
7 October 2023 –27 November 2023**

31 October 2023	HOU-007-23	Sale of Housing Revenue Account Land 132 Morant Road, Colchester	Suzanne Norton	To approve the sale of a parcel of HRA land to the front of 132 Morant Road outlined in blue on the plan in Appendix A of this report, to the owner of 132 Morant Road, in accordance with the Disposal of Small Parcels of Land Policy.	Decision implemented 7 November 2023
31 October 2023	HOU-008-23	Award of Contract for Delivery of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1 Energy Improvement Project – ref: 0349	Matin Norgett	To award a contract to TSG Building Services Ltd to undertake package 1 of the SHDF delivery work.  To go back out to tender for the remaining packages of work.	Decision implemented 14 November 2023
2 Novemb er 2023	HOU-009-23	Acquisition of a Family Home from a Developer on Cowdray Avenue	Terri Hamilton	To agree to Colchester City Council being able to acquire an additional family home from the developer within the Cowdray Avenue development.  To agree to the appointment of Colchester Borough Homes as a “Clerk of Works” and “Employers Agent” to supervise the quality of the construction of the homes to be acquired.	Decision implemented 9 November 2023



**Record of Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members  
7 October 2023 –27 November 2023**

<b>Portfolio – Leisure, Culture and Heritage</b>					
<b>Date</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Result</b>
16 November 2023	CUL-001-23	Gladstone MRM Ltd renewal of contract	Adam Britton	<p>To approve the award of contract to Gladstone MRM Ltd for the provision of leisure management software for a three-year period from 1st March 2024 via a direct award through the GCloud13 framework (RM1557.13). With the option to extend for a further 12 months. Procurement have been involved in the process and support a direct award.</p> <p>CCC contract value is £53,689.75 per annum and totals £161,069.25 over the three full years of the contract period, plus implementation and migration costs of up to £20,000.</p>	Decision implemented 23 November 2023

<b>Portfolio – Neighbourhood Services and Waste</b>					
<b>Date</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Result</b>
No decisions in this period					

**Record of Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members  
7 October 2023 –27 November 2023**

Portfolio – Planning, Environment and Sustainability					
Date	Number	Report Title	Author	Decision	Result
10 October 2023	ECO-003-23	Consultation on Implementation of Plan Making Reforms	Bethany Jones	To agree the response as set out in Appendix A to the Report as answers to the consultation questions posed.	Decision implemented 17 October 2023
10 October 2023	ECO-004-23	ECC's Bus Network Consultation	Jane Thompson	<p>The Council thanks ECC for the opportunity to consider the Essex Bus Service Review and acknowledges that ECC must use residents' funds wisely, however the Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- • oppose any reduction in any bus services which currently provides benefit to residents. However, we will be interested to hear how the local community will be served by the new combined services, or by replacing the bus routes due to be withdrawn with a demand-responsive service giving residents access to the city centre and other destinations.</li> <li>• request that the services which are recommended for review will be monitored, and that the community will be given the opportunity comment on any changes to these services as part of a future review.</li> <li>• request that the supported services are considered as part of a wider</li> </ul>	Decision implemented 17 October 2023

**Record of Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members  
7 October 2023 –27 November 2023**

			<p>review to bus provision in the borough, helping the community to access bus services and help sustain communities' connectivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• suggest that as part of the review ECC be required to set up a mechanism which will identify in advance any commercial services which are at risk of being terminated due to them not being commercially viable. This will enable ECC to be agile and able to step in to support a service, if required, in a timely manner.</li> </ul> <p>to plan how to promote all bus services to the local community to help make them more commercially viable and provide future resilience. develop a vision for delivering the step-change in bus services necessary to increase bus patronage and look forward to working with ECC and the bus operators to help design the Enhanced Partnership plan and the wholesale review of bus services and promotions to help operators and ECC to deliver a quality bus service for all Colchester residents.</p> <p>The Council endorsed the work on the Bus Service Investment Plan and</p>	
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**Record of Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members  
7 October 2023 –27 November 2023**

				the Enhanced Partnership in developing bus services which can support the local community and the Council's response to the BSIP consultation can be found in Appendix 1 to the report.	
6 November 2023	ENV-001-23	ECC Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) Consultation	Jane Thompson	<p>To thank ECC for the opportunity to respond to the consultation and acknowledge that the Council's consultation response will help fine tune the LCWIP plan, thereby helping target investment to encourage people to choose to walk and cycle; in turn helping reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.</p> <p>The Council would suggest that the LCWIP plan for Colchester could be even better if the changes set out in the report are included in the final Colchester LCWIP.</p>	Decision implemented 13 November 2023
9 November 2023	ENV-002-23	ECC Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) Route 7 Consultation	Jane Thoompson	<p>To thank ECC for the opportunity to respond to the consultation and anticipate that the Council's response will help fine tune the LCWIP Route 7, thereby helping target investment in this route which will encourage people to choose to walk and cycle; in turn helping reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality in the area.</p>	Decision implemented 16 November 2023

**Record of Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members  
7 October 2023 –27 November 2023**

			<p>The Council approves of the proposed route, and would suggest that the LCWIP Route 7 could be even better if the following changes are included in the final plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- • link with LCWIP route 4 via new crossing of St Andrews Avenue. This will give Greenstead residents more direct access to the city centre.</li> <li>• links into Highwoods Centre and into Colchester Business Park south (Wyncolls Road) giving more and better access to employment for Greenstead residents.</li> <li>• the proposed routes 7a,7b, 7c, 7d set out in the recent Colchester LCWIP consultation, which will link the route 7 to the local area giving even more work opportunities as well as study facilities at the University.</li> </ul> <p>We understand that the criteria for LCWIP mean that walking routes will generally follow the existing road network due to these routes usually being more direct, better lit and better maintained than off road routes. However, links within communities will need investment if walking is to be encouraged along these routes. It</p>	
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**Agenda item 13**

**Record of Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members  
7 October 2023 –27 November 2023**

				should also be noted that more direct and better crossing facilities, which give shorter journey times where roads sever walking routes, also help increase the number of people walking.	
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**Portfolio – Resources**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Result</b>
19 October 2023	RES-001-23	Award of Contract for Roof Repairs and installation of PV at Colchester Garrison Gym - 0351	Martin Norgett	To award a contract to Breyer Group Plc to undertake the roofing repairs and install PV to the Garrison Gym.	Decision implemented 26 October 2023
8 November 2023	RES-002-23	Irrecoverable Debts over £12,000 – Sundry Debts	Ruth Northcott	To approve the writing off of the following Sundry Debts totalling £25000.00 which have proved irrecoverable.	Decision implemented 15 November 2023

**Portfolio – Strategy**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Result</b>
25 October 2023	STR-005-23	Award of Contract for Electoral Printing	Andrew Weavers	To award a contract to Sciprint Limited for election and electoral registration printing for a period of 3 years with the option to extend for a period up to 3 years with an annual review subject to performance.	Decision Implemented 1 November 2023

28 November 2023

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Sarah Cheek</b> ☎ 282271
<b>Title</b>	<b>Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	All		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request that the Committee recommends to Full Council that it approves the revised schedule of polling districts and polling places within the City of Colchester area.

## 2. Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 To recommend to Full Council that the revised schedule of polling places set out in Appendix A and the explanation of changes contained at Appendix B of this report be approved.
- 2.2 To delegate to the Returning Officer authority to approve an alternative polling place if any polling place becomes unavailable or found to be unsuitable in the run up to an election.

## 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 Consideration has been given to the suitability, accessibility, of each polling place and station and, in particular the situation of the polling station for ease and convenience to the elector.

## 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The alternative to the proposed changes is to keep the status quo until a full review of polling districts and places can be undertaken following the Electoral Review in 2026.

## 5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Administration Act 2013 require each local authority to undertake periodic reviews of polling districts and polling places for UK Parliamentary elections every five years. In accordance with these Acts, this review had to be completed by 31 January 2025. The last compulsory review took place in 2020.
- 5.2 Polling districts are geographical areas created by sub-dividing the Colchester electoral area into smaller parts for voting. Each polling district must be allocated a polling place which is a building or area in which the polling stations will be situated.

- 5.3 Although the statutory requirement is to review the polling districts and polling places used at parliamentary elections, they will also be used at Local Government elections and any future referendums. Polling district boundaries will therefore not cross existing Parliamentary constituency or Local Government ward boundaries.
- 5.4 However, due to the current electoral review being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission England and their advice that it would not be appropriate to undertake a full review of polling districts at this stage the Council has not undertaken a full review of the current polling districts within the City area.
- 5.5 Following the publication by the Local Government Boundary Commission England of its final new warding pattern recommendations in 2026 a full review of the polling districts and places will be undertaken.
- 5.6 Whilst not carrying out a full review the opportunity has been taken to undertake a consultation on polling stations to ensure that the Council meets its obligation to keep these under regular review.
- 5.7 In response to the consultation and taking into account voter accessibility and venue availability the following changes to polling places have been made and which are included in the details in Appendix A and Appendix B:

**Berechurch**: polling place expanded to enable flexibility to use the C3 Centre as an alternative polling station to Plum Hall

**Greenstead**: to formalise the change of polling station from St John Ambulance to the Hythe Community Centre

**Lexden and Braiswick**: polling station changed to the Colchester Croquet Club from Kingswood Hoe School

**Marks Tey and Layer**: changed polling place to Birch and formalised the polling station from St Mary's Church Layer Breton to Birch Memorial Hall.

**New Town and Christchurch**: polling station changed to the Pegasus Club from Hamilton Road School

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 6.1 As far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible. Where new polling places are being used, the accessibility has been assessed as being suitable.
- 6.2 Polling places will be kept under constant review and equality and accessibility considerations will form part of the process.

## **7. Strategic Plan implications**

- 7.1 Electoral arrangements form part of the Council's governance arrangements which in turn forms parts of the Council's commitment to customer excellence which underpins the Council's Strategic Plan.



## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 Councillors and the public were consulted as part of a consultation which ran from 16 October 2023 until 6 November 2023 and the comments received are attached at Appendix C to this report.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 During the period of consultation, maps, current polling districts, elector numbers, and any other relevant information was available for public inspection on the Council's website.
- 9.2 The final schedule of polling districts and polling places will be published on the Council's website and will be published in the run up to an election.

## **10. Health and Safety and Risk Management Implications**

- 10.1.1 Each polling station is risk assessed for Health and Safety purposes.

## **11. Financial and Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

- 11.1 None identified.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A – Proposed schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- Appendix B – Explanation of changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations.
- Appendix C – Responses received during public consultation.

**Appendix A**



**Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

**Dated: Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October with revision on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November**

**Appendix A - Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Polling Place</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Berechurch Ward</b>			
AA Berechurch	Berechurch & Rainsborowe Road Polling Districts	C3 Centre	Under Review
AB Willows & Monkwick	Willows & Monkwick and Barnhall Polling Districts	Thomas Lord Audley School	Status Quo
AC Mersea Road	St Margaret's Church Hall Stansted Road	St Margaret's Church Hall Stansted Road	Status Quo
AD Blackheath	Polling District of Blackheath	Orchard Baptist Church Blackheath	Status Quo
EC Cherry Trees	Sexton Close	Cherry Trees Community Hall	Status Quo
<b>Castle Ward</b>			
AE Jumbo	Quaker Meeting House	Quaker Meeting House	Status Quo
AF Castle	Castle Methodist Church	Castle Methodist Church	Status Quo
AG Riverside	The Celtic Rose Centre	The Celtic Rose Centre	Status Quo
AH Cowdray Avenue	Belle Vue Social Club	Belle Vue Social Club	Status Quo
<b>Greenstead Ward</b>			
BH Hawthorn Avenue	Greenstead Community Centre	Greenstead Community Centre	Status Quo
BI Avon Way	Greenstead Ward	Forest Road Meeting Hall	Status Quo
BJ Greenstead Road	Hythe Community Centre, Ventura Drive	Hythe Community Centre	Amend
BM Longridge	Hazelmere Junior School	Hazelmere Junior School	Status Quo
<b>Highwoods Ward</b>			
AN East Highwoods	Highwoods Ward	St Johns & Highwoods Community Centre	Status Quo
AO West Highwoods	Jack Andrews Drive	The Ark Church, Highwoods	Status Quo
AP Myland East	Jack Andrews Drive	The Ark Church, Highwoods	Status Quo

**Appendix A - Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Polling Place</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<b>Lexden &amp; Braiswick Ward</b>			
AQ Trafalgar	Lexden & Braiswick and Prettygate Wards	Praiseway Church Straight Road	Status Quo
AS East Lexden	East Lexden Polling District	Colchester Croquet Club	Amend
AT Braiswick	Woods Bowling Pavilion	Woods Bowling Pavilion	Status Quo
EJ Aldham	Polling District of Aldham Village	Aldham Village Hall	Status Quo
ET Eight Ash Green	Eight Ash Green Village Hall	Eight Ash Green Village Hall	Status Quo
EU West Bergholt	Orpen Memorial Hall	Orpen Memorial Hall	Status Quo
<b>Marks Tey &amp; Layer Ward</b>			
GA Birch	The Parish of Birch	Birch Memorial Hall	Status Quo
GB Layer De La Haye	Queen Elizabeth Hall New Cut	Queen Elizabeth Hall Annexe	Status Quo
GC Layer Marney	Layer Marney Polling District	Layer Marney Tower	Status Quo
GD Layer Breton	The Parish of Birch	Birch Memorial Hall	Amend
GE Messing	The Parish of Messing	Messing Village Hall	Status Quo
GF Inworth	The Parishes of Messing & Inworth	Messing Village Hall	Status Quo
GG Gt Wigborough	Peldon and the Wigboroughs Polling Districts	Peldon & Wigboroughs Community Hall	Status Quo
GH Lt Wigborough	Peldon and the Wigboroughs Polling Districts	Peldon & Wigboroughs Community Hall	Status Quo
GI Salcott	The Parish of Salcott	Salcott Old School Hall	Status Quo
GJ Virley	The Parish of Salcott	Salcott Old School Hall	Status Quo
GL West Stanway	Marks Tey & Layer Ward	Stanway Village Hall	Status Quo
GM Copford	The Parish of Copford	Copford Village Hall	Status Quo
GN Easthorpe	The Parish of Easthorpe	Easthorpe Church Hall	Status Quo
GO Marks Tey	Polling District of Marks Tey	Marks Tey Parish Hall	Status Quo

**Appendix A - Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Polling Place</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<b>Mersea &amp; Pyefleet Ward</b>			
EO Abberton	Abberton & Langenhoe Polling District	Abberton & Langenhoe Village Hall	Status Quo
EP East Mersea	The Parish of East Mersea	East Mersea Village Hall	Status Quo
EQ Fingringhoe	The Parish of Fingringhoe	Fingringhoe Village Hall	Status Quo
ER Langenhoe	The Parish of Abberton	Abberton & Langenhoe Village Hall	Status Quo
ES Peldon	Peldon Polling District	Peldon & Wigborough Community Hall	Status Quo
EV West Mersea	The Parish of West Mersea	The Mersea Centre	Status Quo
<b>Mile End Ward</b>			
AU Bergholt Road	Mile End Road	Myland Parish Halls	Status Quo
AV Mile End Road	Mile End Road	Myland Parish Halls	Status Quo
AW Turner Road	Highwoods Country Park	Highwoods Country Park Visitor Centre	Status Quo
<b>New Town &amp; Christ Church Ward</b>			
AI Christchurch	Christ Church	Christ Church Hall	Status Quo
AJ Hamilton Road	Hamilton Road Polling District	The Pegasus Club	Amend
AX St Johns Green	YMCA Magdalene Street	YMCA Community Hall	Status Quo
AZ Canterbury	St Stephens Church Canterbury Road	St Stephens Church Centre	Status Quo
<b>Old Heath &amp; The Hythe Ward</b>			
AK Scarletts	Winsley Square Polling District	Worsnop House	Status Quo
AL Barnhall	Abbots Community Hall Ladbroke Drive	Abbots Community Hall	Status Quo
AM Old Heath	Old Heath Community Centre D'Arcy Road	Old Heath Community Centre	Status Quo
AY Hythe	Hythe Community Centre, Ventura Drive	Hythe Community Centre	Status Quo
BA Winsley Square	Worsnop House Old Heath Road	Worsnop House	Status Quo
ED Rowhedge	The Parish of Rowhedge	Rowhedge Village Hall	Status Quo

**Appendix A - Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Polling Place</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<b>Prettygate Ward</b>			
AR Home Farm	Prettygate Ward	Coco Care (Oldstone Church) Hall	Status Quo
BB East Prettygate	Plume Avenue United Reform Church	Plume Avenue United Reform Church	Status Quo
BC West Prettygate	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	Status Quo
BD James Carter	Straight Road Community Centre	Straight Road Community Centre	Status Quo
<b>Rural North Ward</b>			
EA Dedham	The Parish of Dedham	The Assembly Rooms High Street	Status Quo
EB Langham	The Parish of Langham	Langham Community Centre	Status Quo
EE Boxted	The Parish of Boxted	Boxted Village Hall	Status Quo
EF Fordham	The Parish of Fordham	Fordham Village Hall	Status Quo
EG Great Horkesley	The Parish of Great Horkesley	Great Horkesley New Village Hall	Status Quo
EH Little Horkesley	The Parish of Little Horkesley	Little Horkesley Village Hall	Status Quo
EI Wormingford	The Parish of Wormingford	Wormingford Village Hall	Status Quo
EK Chappel	The Parish of Chappel & Wakes Colne	Chappel & Wakes Colne Village Hall	Status Quo
EL Great Tey	The Parish of Great Tey	Great Tey Village Hall	Status Quo
EM Mount Bures	The Parish of Mount Bures	Mount Bures Village Hall	Status Quo
EN Wakes Colne	The Parish of Chappel & Wakes Colne	Chappel & Wakes Colne Village Hall	Status Quo
<b>Shrub End Ward</b>			
BE Rainsborowe Road	Shrub End Community & Sports Centre	Shrub End Community & Sports Centre	Status Quo
BF Shrub End	Shrub End Polling District	Paxman Academy	Status Quo
BG Lordswood Road	The Community Hall (Musket Club)	The Community Hall (Musket Club)	Status Quo

**Appendix A - Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Polling Place</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<b>St John &amp; St Annes Ward</b>			
BK St Annes	St Annes Church Compton Road	St Annes Church	Status Quo
BL Churnwood	Oak Tree Community Centre	Oak Tree Community Centre	Status Quo
BN Ipswich Road	St Johns Church Community Centre	St Johns Church Community Centre	Status Quo
BO Parsons Heath	Friars Grove Primary School	Friars Grove Primary School	Status Quo
<b>Stanway Ward</b>			
GP Stanway	Stanway Village Hall	Stanway Village Hall	Status Quo
<b>Tiptree Ward</b>			
GK Tiptree Grove	Tiptree Grove Polling District	Tiptree United Reformed Church	Status Quo
GQ Tiptree Church	St Luke's Church	St Luke's Church Extension	Status Quo
GR Tiptree Heath	Tiptree Heath Primary School	Tiptree Heath Primary School	Status Quo
GS Tiptree Maypole	Tiptree Ward	St Luke's Church Extension	Status Quo
<b>Wivenhoe Ward</b>			
EW University	University of Essex	Student Centre University of Essex	Status Quo
EX Wivenhoe Cross	Broomgrove School	Broomgrove School	Status Quo
EY Wivenhoe Quay	William Loveless Hall	William Loveless Hall	Status Quo
EZ Broome Grove	Broomgrove School	Broomgrove School	Status Quo

**Appendix B - Explanation of Proposed Changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations**  
**Appendix B**

**Below is an explanation of any proposed changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations**

Polling District	AA – Berechurch
Ward	Berechurch
Current Polling Station	Plum Hall Common Room, Nancy Smith Close, Berechurch Road, CO2 7QU
Background	<p>We currently use the Colchester Borough Homes site Plum Hall. With the polling station located in the Common Room. This is a small room, similar in size to the typical front room. The space of the room is limited and there is no where for the furniture to be stored elsewhere. Accessibility is less than ideal as the normal entry point goes through the communal front door of the flats, with voters then passing through a corridor on to which individual residential flat front doors open onto. There is a door out onto the patio garden but, this is not level access and it is not accessible. Parking is limited as it is a residential site. The polling station is at the northern tip of the polling district, whilst accessible from the main road it is not central.</p>
Recommendation	<p>We are pleased that we have found an alternate venue, we recommend that the C3 Centre is used as the polling station instead. This community church centred on the former garrison building by Abbey Field Medical Centre. As it serves the community and is on the same site as the medical centre it will be well known to the local community. The site is simply huge so space will not be an issue inside the building. It is accessible with level access and electric outer doors. It is also accessible in terms of being on the main road and having plenty of dedicated car parking spaces. Whilst the site is outside the confines of the polling district and the ward, the site is easily accessible for the bulk of the electorate due to the geography of the district.</p> <p>However, this polling station is still under review due to the cost of the premises. The Electoral Services Team hope to negotiate.</p> <p>The recommendation for the polling place therefore includes the polling district itself and the district that the C3 is in – to meet the requirements of the polling place definition.</p>
Proposed Polling Place	Berechurch and Rainsborowe Road Polling Districts
Proposed Polling Station	The C3 Centre, Ypres Road, Colchester CO2 7FD



## Appendix B - Explanation of Proposed Changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations

Polling District	AJ - Hamilton Road
Ward	New Town & Christ Church
Current Polling Station	Hamilton Primary School, Constantine Road, CO3 3GB
Background	Whilst it is not always possible or practical, as far as possible, we avoid using any school as a polling station.
Recommendation	We are pleased that we have found an alternate venue, we recommend that the Pegasus Club on Abbey Fields is used as the polling station going forward. This venue is equally central to the bulk of the electorate within the district. It meets the main criteria in being able to offer adequate space, accessibility, facilities, and parking.
Proposed Polling Place	Hamilton Road Polling District
Proposed Polling Station	Pegasus Club, Circular Road North, CO2 7SU

Polling District	AS – East Lexden
Ward	Lexden & Braiswick
Current Polling Station	Kingswode Hoe School, 8 Sussex Road, Colchester CO3 3QJ
Background	Whilst it is not always possible or practical, as far as possible, we avoid using any school as a polling station. We had previously used Kingswode Hoe School and for one election we also used St Mary's Girls School.
Recommendation	We are pleased that we have found an alternate venue, The Colchester Croquet Club which we have used as a polling station successfully in recent years. Whilst there are some elements of the site that may not be ideal these are negated by other factors. There is not level access to the walkway that leads to the site but, the playing field allows the stepped access to be circumvented. This has been agreed by the site, Electoral Services and our Health & Safety Officer. The size of the carpark is limited, however, there is some off-road parking and the centrality of the polling station to the polling district negates some of this problem. In recent years, neither of these theoretical problems have presented any issue that has been flagged by the polling station staff or voters.
Proposed Polling Place	East Lexden Polling District
Proposed Polling Station	Colchester Croquet Club, Elianore Road, Colchester CO3 3RX

## Appendix B - Explanation of Proposed Changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations

Polling District	BI – Avon Way
Ward	Greenstead
Current Polling Station	Forest Road Meeting Hall, Forest Road, CO4 3XG
Background	There are three polling stations within the site and going by the Electoral Commission's ratios for polling stations per electorate and staff there should be a fourth station, but the polling station is not suitable to allow this.
Recommendation	<p>Following the consultation period and representation from two ward councillors the decision has been taken to continue to use this premises until the full polling district and polling place review commences, following the Electoral Boundary Review. However, should there be any significant changes this will be reviewed again.</p> <p>In the meantime, we continue to use the Forest Road Meeting Hall as the polling station.</p>
Proposed Polling Place	Greenstead Ward
Proposed Polling Station	Forest Road Meeting Hall, Forest Road, CO4 3XG

Polling District	BJ – Greenstead Road
Ward	Greenstead
Current Polling Station	St John Ambulance Colchester, Greenstead Road, Colchester CO1 2SL
Background	<p>We historically used the St John Ambulance centre on Greenstead road as the polling station for this district. Whilst the venue itself was fine we were not always able to book the venue for use as a polling station. However, due to the nature of the venue's primary purpose as a provider for medical training courses it is difficult to book. Especially, for elections on short notice. This led to the need for a portacabin to be located on the Hythe Tesco Superstore carpark, which is far less than ideal.</p> <p>Considering these difficulties, we had to sort a more reliable venue. The nearest available venue was the Hythe Community Centre. This has served as an adequate polling station for this district. The accessibility, size, and parking of the venue are more than satisfactory.</p>
Recommendation	We continue to use the Hythe Community Centre as the permanent venue.
Proposed Polling Place	Hythe Community Centre, Ventura Drive
Proposed Polling Station	Hythe Community Centre, Ventura Drive, Colchester, CO1 2FG

## Appendix B - Explanation of Proposed Changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations

Polling District	GD – Layer Breton
Ward	Marks Tey & Layer Ward
Current Polling Station	St Mary's Church, Layer Breton
Background	The suitability of St Mary's Church is limited. Accessibility is the main problem. This has been overcome by mitigatory measures such as the hiring of a portaloo (for the use of staff), lights and a ramp.
Recommendation	We recommend that Birch Memorial Hall is used as the polling station for the Layer Breton polling district going forward. This is a site that is fit for purpose as a polling station and can accommodate another polling station inside. This will reduce the additional cost of the measures we put in place to overcome the unsuitability of St Mary's Church as a polling station. Whilst it may be further for people to travel to vote in person, due to the rural nature of Layer Breton a large portion of voters would likely have driven to the polling station at the church as it was. We will of course write to the electors in the polling district to advise of the change and invite them to apply for a postal vote, with a letter. The change will also be flagged again on their poll cards.
Proposed Polling Place	The Parish of Birch
Proposed Polling Station	Birch Memorial Hall, Birch, Colchester CO2 0LZ

## Appendix C

### **Below is a summary of the responses received as part of the Consultation**

#### **1. Feedback from Councillor Julie Young regards Greenstead Ward**

- Greenstead is the ward with the largest electorate and the lowest turnout percentage so changes here should be given some additional scrutiny.
- Greenstead is the ward with the lowest car ownership, and this should be taken into consideration when considering the location of the polling stations.
- The Hythe community centre deters voters compared to when it was in the St Johns Ambulance station.
- The polling station should be left at Forest Road. The possibility of using Unity Primary Academy could be explored but using Greenstead Social Club is not a reasonable alternative.

#### **2. Feedback from Councillor Tim Young regards Greenstead Ward**

- Low turnout is a significant issue in Greenstead Ward and the proposed change would make it worse.
- Whilst the limitations of Forest Road Meeting Room are understood, possible adaption to make it more acceptable as a Polling Station.

#### **3. Feedback from Councillor Sam McLean regards regarding Hamilton Road polling district**

- Councillor Sam McLean commented that he was pleased to hear this and the parents of Hamilton will be too.

#### **4. Feedback from Councillor Dave Harris regards St Margaret's Church Hall**

- The front entrance is not disabled friendly. Although there is a side entrance that is. Consideration could be given to a modification at front entrance of Church with a permanent ramp.

#### **5. Feedback from the Acting Returning Officer for Colchester**

- The Acting Returning Officer for Colchester has no objections.

#### **6. Feed back from the Acting Returning Officer for Harwich and North Essex**

- The Acting Returning Officer did not foresee any objections to the recommendations.