

Scrutiny Panel

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall
10 December 2013 at 6.00pm**

The Scrutiny Panel examine the policies and strategies from a borough-wide perspective and ensure the actions of the Cabinet accord with the Council's policies and budget. The Panel reviews corporate strategies that form the Council's Strategic Plan, Council partnerships and the Council's budgetary guidelines, and scrutinises Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decisions which have been called in.

Scrutiny Panel – Terms of Reference

1. To fulfil all the functions of an overview and scrutiny committee under section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and in particular (but not limited to):
 - (a) To review corporate strategies;
 - (b) To ensure that actions of the Cabinet accord with the policies and budget of the Council;
 - (c) To monitor and scrutinise the financial performance of the Council, performance reporting and to make recommendations to the Cabinet particularly in relation to annual revenue and capital guidelines, bids and submissions;
 - (d) To review the Council's spending proposals to the policy priorities and review progress towards achieving those priorities against the Strategic and Implementation Plans;
 - (e) To review the financial performance of the Council and to make recommendations to the Cabinet in relation to financial outturns, revenue and capital expenditure monitors;
 - (f) To review or scrutinise executive decisions made by Cabinet, the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee (in relation to decisions relating to off-street matters only) and the Colchester and Ipswich Joint Museums Committee which have been made but not implemented referred to the Panel pursuant to the Call-In Procedure;
 - (g) To review or scrutinise executive decisions made by Portfolio Holders and officers taking key decisions which have been made but not implemented referred to the Panel pursuant to the Call-In Procedure;
 - (h) To monitor the effectiveness and application of the Call-In Procedure, to report on the number and reasons for Call-In and to make recommendations to the Council on any changes required to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the process;
 - (i) To review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of functions which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet;
 - (j) At the request of the Cabinet, to make decisions about the priority of referrals made in the event of the volume of reports to the Cabinet or creating difficulty for the management of Cabinet business or jeopardising the efficient running of Council business;
2. To fulfil all the functions of the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee ("the Committee") under the Police and Justice Act 2006 and in particular (but not limited to):
 - (a) To review and scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions;
 - (b) To make reports and recommendations to the Council or the Cabinet with respect to the discharge of those functions.

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
SCRUTINY PANEL
10 December 2013 at 6:00pm**

Members

Chairman : Councillor Beverly Davies.
Deputy Chairman : Councillor Marcus Harrington.
Councillors Dave Harris, Jo Hayes, Gerard Oxford,
Kevin Bentley, Nick Cope, Peter Higgins and Mike Hogg.

Substitute Members : All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members
of members of this Panel.

Agenda - Part A

(open to the public including the media)

Members of the public may wish to note that Agenda items 1 to 5 are normally brief and items 6 to 9 are standard items for which there may be no business to consider.

	Pages
1. Welcome and Announcements	1
(a) The Chairman to welcome members of the public and Councillors and to remind all speakers of the requirement for microphones to be used at all times.	
(b) At the Chairman's discretion, to announce information on:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• action in the event of an emergency;• mobile phones switched to silent;• the audio-recording of meetings;• location of toilets;• introduction of members of the meeting.	
2. Substitutions	
Members may arrange for a substitute councillor to attend a meeting on their behalf, subject to prior notice being given. The attendance of substitute councillors must be recorded.	
3. Urgent Items	
To announce any items not on the agenda which the Chairman has agreed to consider because they are urgent and to give reasons for the urgency.	
4. Declarations of Interest	

The Chairman to invite Councillors to declare individually any interests they may have in the items on the agenda. Councillors should consult Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 for full guidance on the registration and declaration of interests. However Councillors may wish to note the following:-

- Where a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest, other pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest in any business of the authority and he/she is present at a meeting of the authority at which the business is considered, the Councillor must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest, whether or not such interest is registered on his/her register of Interests or if he/she has made a pending notification.
- If a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at a meeting, he/she must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter at the meeting. The Councillor must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held unless he/she has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.
- Where a Councillor has another pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at a meeting and where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgment of the public interest, the Councillor must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held unless he/she has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.
- Failure to comply with the arrangements regarding disclosable pecuniary interests without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence, with a penalty of up to £5,000 and disqualification from office for up to 5 years.

5. Minutes

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To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on 29 October and 12 November 2013

6. Have Your Say!

(a) The Chairman to invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition at this meeting – either on an item on the agenda or on a general matter not on this agenda. You should indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

(b) The Chairman to invite contributions from members of the public who wish to Have Your Say! on a general matter not on this agenda.

7. Decisions taken under special urgency provisions

To consider any Portfolio Holder decisions taken under the special urgency provisions.

8. Referred items under the Call in Procedure

To consider any decisions taken under the Call in Procedure.

9. Items requested by members of the Panel and other Members

(a) To evaluate requests by members of the Panel for an item relevant to the Panel's functions to be considered.

(b) To evaluate requests by other members of the Council for an item relevant to the Panel's functions to be considered.

Members of the panel may use agenda item 'a' (all other members will use agenda item 'b') as the appropriate route for referring a 'local government matter' in the context of the Councillor Call for Action to the panel. Please refer to the panel's terms of reference for further procedural arrangements.

10. Work Programme

13 - 15

See report from the Assistant Chief Executive.

11. Parking Services in Colchester

16 - 22

To consider a joint presentation from Matthew Young, Head of Operational Services and Richard Walker, North Essex Parking Partnership Group Manager.

Councillor Robert Mitchell, Chairman of the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee has accepted the Panel's invitation to attend the meeting.

12. Treasury Management Strategy Statement // Mid Year Review

23 - 30

See report from the Assistant Chief Executive.

13. Half Yearly Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action

31 - 61

Plan

See report from the Assistant Chief Executive.

14. Exclusion of the public

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) 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).

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
SCRUTINY PANEL
10 December 2013 at 6:00pm**

Agenda - Part B

(not open to the public or the media)

	Pages
15. Treasury Management Strategy Statement // Mid Year Review	62

The following report contains exempt information (financial/business affairs of a particular person, including the authority holding information) as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

See Appendix B to the report by the Assistant Chief Executive

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SCRUTINY PANEL 12 NOVEMBER 2013

Present :- Councillor Beverly Davies (Chairman)
Councillors Kevin Bentley, Nick Cope, Marcus Harrington, Dave Harris, Jo Hayes, Peter Higgins, Mike Hogg and Gerard Oxford

Also in Attendance :- Councillor Annie Feltham
Councillor Will Quince
Councillor Paul Smith
Councillor Dennis Willetts

32. Decisions taken under special urgency provisions

A report was submitted by the Assistant Chief Executive explaining that a portfolio holder decision had been taken which had been deemed to be sufficiently urgent that the call-in procedure would not apply. The decision was to approve the Council's joining of the Essex Business Rates Pool and, in accordance with the statutory requirements, the Monitoring Officer and Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel had certified the immediate implementation of the decision and that the call-in procedure would not apply.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

33. Referred items under the Call in Procedure // Allotment Charges and Review of Tenancy Agreements

Councillor Harris (in respect of his acquaintance with members of the public in attendance at the meeting and his involvement in Colchester in Bloom) declared his non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

A report was submitted to the Panel explaining that the decision taken by Councillor Feltham, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Leisure, relating to allotment charges and the review of Allotment Tenancy Agreements had been called in for review by the Panel.

The reasons for the call-in by Councillor Lissimore, supported by four other Councillors, together with the notice of decision and the report were attached to the report.

Councillor Lissimore was invited by the Chairman to present the case, expanding on the reasons for the call-in. She referred to the historical basis of the size of allotments which were intended to provide for the self sufficiency of working families. She had been an allotment holder for ten years and had personal experience of the benefits of the activity in terms of healthy eating, educating young people about food, social interaction and physical activity which mirrored many of the priorities identified in the

Council's Strategic Plan. She had undertaken research into allotment costs across the country and had determined that the average cost for a half size plot was £22.60, with many local authorities also offering significant reductions for concessions. According to her research, the proposal to increase the cost of half size plots to £47.50 per year was therefore more than double the national average cost. She considered there were other options available to increase income for the Council, particularly in relation to the number of vacant plots which currently totalled 42 whilst there remained a large number of people on the waiting list for a plot. 40% of allotment holders had indicated their dissatisfaction with the way the Council managed the reallocation of plots. She was also concerned at the proposal to restrict allotment holders to one plot per household as she considered there were many people who would be disadvantaged by this restriction. Councillor Lissimore accepted the principle of the allotment service being cost neutral which had been identified as a priority in 2008. She was of the view that the reduction in size of plots had significantly contributed to the achievement of this target, without the need to consider additional increases in costs for the allotment holders. She pointed out that the original cost neutral target had been based on only the direct costs associated with the allotment service whilst the latest review had also included indirect costs which meant that the service currently had a shortfall in costs of £36,100. She questioned why the most recent costs had been calculated on a different basis, why they had been applied to the review and on what basis they had been calculated.

The following members of the public addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(2):

Melva Lingard, Committee member from the Colchester Allotment Association, spoke of her concern that allotment holders would be forced to relinquish their plots as they would find the activity unaffordable. She referred to the number of plots that were not being actively cultivated which she considered should be subject to closer monitoring by the allotment inspectors. She was also concerned about the number of plots that were vacant but had yet to be re allocated. She was of the view that there were people sharing households who were unrelated and it would not be fair to prevent more than one person in each from holding an allotment. In her view this was preferable to having large numbers of long standing vacancies. She felt there needed to be closer co-operation between allotment holders and the inspection officers as this would lead to increased rental income. She was aware of allotment holders who were in danger of having to give up their plots on the basis of affordability and she felt this should be avoided.

Sally Young, Secretary of the Colchester Allotment Association, stated her concern that the Allotment Association had not been consulted about the proposed increase in charges. She felt the charges had increased very rapidly over recent years but little improvements had been made in the turn-around of vacant plots. She also mentioned the many benefits of allotment holding, in particular the social interaction and sharing of information between allotment holders, many of whom did not have access to other areas of open space. She was particularly concerned that those who benefitted most from the activity would be the least able to afford the proposed increased charges.

Tom Hall, an allotment holder, had calculated that, since 2009 the costs of allotment holding had increased by 83% and was of the view that this was grossly out of line with

the economic trends and the charges in other parts of the country. He was of the view that a proportion of the costs were attributable to the way the council administered the service. In particular, he referred to the inspections of the sites which were undertaken two or three times a year which were intended to identify which sites were not being actively cultivated. He felt that this regime was easy to circumvent and that the inspections were not delivering the required outcomes.

Jackie Briggs, a Committee member from Colchester Allotment Association, recognised the need for the allotments service to be a cost neutral one but she felt that the Council needed to listen to the allotment holders views. Allotments had originally been created for working families but more recently this demographic had changed. She expanded on the benefits of allotment holding previously referred to in terms of the assistance given in schools by allotment holders, the educational benefits for young people, the competitions that the allotment holders participated in, the sharing of knowledge about plants and insects and the fund raising activities which had supported local organisations such as St Helena Hospice. She urged the Council to think again on the charging proposals.

Michael Ellis acknowledged that the service should not be subsidised but he felt it was too easy to simply increase the costs. He considered that measures should be taken first to maximise occupancy of plots and to address the problem of plots being left uncultivated. He had calculated that a significant proportion of the total allotment holding was allocated for access and he considered that an improvement in the allotment layouts to reduce access routes would lead to a significant increase in revenue. He did not consider it necessary for the Council to invest resources in computer software in order to manage the waiting list and he was of the view that postal costs could be reduced by means of correspondence being sent to allotment holders by email.

Councillor Quince attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel.

He acknowledged that the numbers of people attending the meeting indicated that this was considered to be an important issue for these people. He referred to the 223 people currently on the allotment waiting list and the 41 vacant plots in the context of his knowledge of people being waiting for plots to be allocated for a number of years. He repeated the acknowledged benefits, in terms of cheap food, education and companionship but felt that the important issue was one of management. He considered that allotments were administered elsewhere by single individuals at little cost and that the current management arrangement at the Council was providing poor value for money. He was particularly concerned about the slow turnover of vacant plots and was of the view that, if this could be undertaken more quickly, the income for the service would be greater.

Councillor Willetts attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. He congratulated Councillor Lissimore in calling in the decision as he considered that the issue was one of significant mismanagement of the service. He was of the view that the prices were escalating ahead of inflation rates, whilst the Council's actions in relation to plot turnover were ensuring that the supply was being curtailed. He stated his concerns about the Human Rights implications of the proposals

as he considered that the restriction on one allotment holder per household was not treating people equally and would lead to accusations of discrimination against the Council. He was further concerned that the decision had not been based on sound financial information. He did not feel that the proposed price increase had been fully justified, particularly in view of the levels of allotment charges elsewhere in the country and in particular in relation to the charges associated with Parish Council managed allotment sites. He quoted costs associated with the allotment service which he had obtained from the Council's website, including those for water (£3,600), printing (£1,180), tree surgery (£2,000), Conservation Volunteers and Veolia, grounds maintenance contractors (£23,460). He sought an explanation regarding the basis and purpose of these costs.

Councillor Feltham, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Leisure, was invited by the Chairman to respond to the points raised. She thanked the members of Colchester Allotment Association and other allotment holders for attending the meeting and for their comments and she confirmed her commitment to the wellbeing of the people of the Borough, including those who held one of the Council's 1,100 allotments across 19 sites in the Borough. She acknowledged the information that allotments in other parts of the country were cheaper than in Colchester but she was aware of the costs involved in the service and she was committed to reducing the subsidy provided by the Council. She was sympathetic to the many benefits of allotment holding and she reminded the Panel that the proposed increase in cost equated to 15p per week for a full sized plot. She did not accept the view that the restriction on household access to allotments was an infringement of Human Rights as she was not of the view that allotment holding was considered to be a basic human right. She was of the view that the issue was one of fairness and she did not consider it to be fair for the Council to continue to subsidise the allotment service. She considered that the costs associated with the service were genuine ones, she acknowledged that there were occasions when it did take time to reallocate plots when they became vacant but she believed that the inspecting officers were working to identify inactivity on plots and to ensure that delays in reallocation were reduced to a minimum.

The Panel members were invited to confer with Councillors Feltham and Lissimore and the following issues were raised:

- Councillor Harris – the nature of any consultation with the allotment holders and, if this has not been the case, the possibility of a dialogue being set up as soon as possible in order to build on previous positive relationships and the need for Performance Indicators to be agreed which would assist the site stewards with their responsibilities and potentially contribute to reductions in management costs;
- Councillor Bentley – a breakdown of the Parks and Recreation Management fee of £34,900 and the measures identified to reduce this cost, the potential to make better use of the site stewards in providing up to date information about plots to the Area officers, whether consideration had been given to placing the management of the allotments with a Trust or the possibility of utilising the management model successfully adopted by Parish Councils and whether it was considered likely that the Community Right to Challenge would have any implications for the service in the future;
- Councillor Harrington – a suggestion to reduce the time taken to reallocate plots by

- the imposition of a time limit for acceptance, the reason for applying both direct and indirect costs to the charging review and whether there were any concerns about the continued affordability of plots for some allotment holders;
- Councillor Oxford – whether any investigation had been undertaken in relation to the levels of subsidy in other Local Authorities and suggesting the reallocation process be speeded up by inviting the top five on the waiting list to jointly attend a pre-determined site visit;
 - Councillor Higgins – to reduce the period of time for reallocation of vacant plots all on the waiting list could be invited to ‘bid’ for a vacant plot with the highest placed bidder being successful;
 - Councillor Hayes – the potential to reduce grounds maintenance costs by utilising the services of smaller and local contractors or operatives.

In response to issues raised, the following information was provided by Councillor Feltham, supported by Bob Penny, Community Development Manager:

- No specific consultation had been undertaken with Colchester Allotment Association, it was understood that the members had been notified of the proposed charges along with other allotment holders;
- The Parks and Recreation Management fee was made up of the proportion of the cost of four Area Parks and Recreation Officers who each had responsibility for the management and inspection of allotments in their area;
- The continued requirement for officers to attend allotment sites to determine potential cultivation disputes and to liaise with the grounds maintenance contractor;
- The current system for reallocation of vacant plots was for individual contact to be made with the person at the top of the waiting list and for that person to be given a period of time to visit the site and to decide whether they wished to accept the offer. If the offer was declined contact was then made with the next person on the list. It was acknowledged that this process could take some weeks before the plot was successfully reallocated;
- Measures to reduce the management costs included a number of online self-help initiatives, including waiting list details and allotment plot maps to identify vacancies;
- A meeting was due to held within the next two weeks with all site stewards with the principle aim of identifying measures to reduce reallocation times;
- It was considered important to be clear about the real costs of the service to the Borough and, as such, it was therefore considered necessary to apply both direct and indirect costs to cost neutral calculations;
- Results of surveys of allotment holders in 2009 and 2011 had indicated that 95.8% and 92% respectively had considered that allotments were good value for money. It was not known at what point this perception might change, should costs continue to increase incrementally. However, the subsidy of the service was reducing in line with the objectives of a cost neutral service;
- The levels of subsidy for the allotments service at other Local Authorities was not known;
- The Community Right to Challenge had been considered but it was not thought to have a potential implication given the ownership of the allotments was with the Council;

The Chairman invited Councillors Lissimore and Feltham to sum up their cases.

Councillor Lissimore highlighted the costs associated with the grounds maintenance contractor and the potential to reduce them by utilising other options. She acknowledged the problem of the service being subsidised by the Council but she remained puzzled regarding the imposition of the indirect costs and she considered the process for the reallocation of plots needed to be significantly improved to reduce the number of vacancies. She was also of the view that the relationship between the Council and Colchester Allotment Association needed to be built on and used in a more positive way.

Councillor Feltham explained that the true cost of the service needed to be identified clearly and openly. She confirmed that the service was costing the Council over £30,000 per year and was of the view that charges needed to be increased in order to reduce this subsidy. She welcomed the suggestions to improve the reallocation of plots and hoped that it would be possible to utilise one or more of these to improve efficiency in this area.

RESOLVED (SIX voted FOR, TWO voted AGAINST and ONE ABSTAINED) that the decision on the allotment charges and the review of the tenancy agreements be referred back to the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Leisure for reconsideration and she be requested to have regard to the various options and suggestions identified by the Panel regarding alternative service delivery, potential savings and reduction in management costs.

34. Local Council Tax Support 2014/15

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Customer Services proposing the continuation of the existing Local Council Tax Support Scheme without fundamental amendment into the second year 2014/15.

Councillor Paul Smith, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, together with Leonie Rathbone, Head of Customer Services and Sara Wilcock, Project Manager, attended the meeting and explained that the scheme had first been implemented in April 2013 and any amendments to the scheme for 2014/15 would need to be agreed by the Council before 31 January 2014. It was proposed to limit the amendments to the scheme only to bring it in line with national legislative amendments and otherwise for it remain unaltered.

It was explained that Local Council Tax Support currently helped 12,000 residents reduce their outgoings with the value of the support granted totaling £9.3 million. All working age recipients of support had to pay a minimum of 20% towards their bill. However, regulations still required local schemes to protect pensionable age residents from any reduction to their level of support as a result of the localisation of the scheme.

The Key elements of the Local Scheme were summarized as:

- Back to Work Bonus – additional 4 weeks support for those who find work

- Award based on 80% of Council Tax liability
- £6000 capital /savings limit
- Second adult rebate claims ended on 1 April 13
- Flat rate £10 non-dependent deduction
- Include child maintenance as income (child & spousal)
- Include Child Benefit as income
- £25 flat rate earnings disregard

A range of initiatives had been undertaken across Colchester to promote and consult on the changes to the scheme, including writing to 7000 current working age recipients of support, press releases and information highlighted on the council website. The responses received were detailed in the report.

The single parent charity Gingerbread had requested the reconsideration of the inclusion of Child Maintenance as an income in respect of single parents and it was proposed to consult specifically on this issue next year.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that it be recommended to Council that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, as set out within the report by the Head of Customer Services and detailed within the Policy document, be agreed for 2014/15.

35. Capital Expenditure Monitor 2013/14 – Quarter 2

Councillors Bentley and Harris (in respect of their being members of Essex County Council) declared their non-pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

A report was submitted by the Assistant Chief Executive inviting the Panel to review the progress against all capital schemes in the first six months of 2013/14.

Councillor Paul Smith, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, together with Steve Heath, Finance Manager, Financial Accounting, attended the meeting and explained that the report set out details of spending on all schemes along with existing expenditure forecasts provided by budget managers to provide an indication of progress against schemes in monetary terms. Accrued capital spending in the first six months of the year totalled £6.8 million, representing 27% of the projected spend for 2013/14. The Capital Programme had increased by £0.3m since the previous report. New funding has been added, including £254k from Section 106 and external contributions and £53k from revenue. The Capital Programme now stood at £29.3 million.

A RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status had been added to the monitoring report to provide a clear indicator of overall project performance and although there were no 'Red' schemes, a total of 11 schemes had been classed as 'Amber' by the budget manager.

The following issues were raised by Panel members:

- Councillor Higgins – the delay with the flat recycling extension and whether income

- had increased as a result of the food waste collection service;
- Councillor Harrington – whether there were plans to improve the toilet facilities for the disabled at Lion Walk, the detail of the completed schemes at Colchester Leisure World and Firstsite;
 - Councillor Harris – whether the flat recycling extension related to the three storey blocks only and the difficulties associated with achieving this and the level of funding being directed to the Garrison Gymnasium;
 - Councillor Cope – whether the carbon management programme 2 included the solar panel initiative and the high level of investment being allocated to the ICT Review and whether these costs were included in the calculations of online and face to face transactions;
 - Councillor Harris – whether the current CCTV arrangements included coverage of the Licensed Taxi rank;
 - Councillor Higgins – the amber status of the Castle Museum project and whether there were any concerns regarding the planned re-opening of the Museum;
 - Councillor Hayes – the nature of the revised funding bid for the Creative Business Hub and the new issues relating to the Pumping Main at Distillery Lane/Haven Road.

In response to issues raised, the following information was provided:

- No direct income was received for the food waste collection but the Council did make savings as a consequence of less waste going to landfill;
- The Firstsite scheme was in relation to the final finishes to the project rather than any ongoing subsidy;
- The amber status of the flat recycling extension was due to the delays with bin redesign work required due to the addition of a food waste caddy;
- The Garrison Gymnasium work had been delayed due to a fire at the site and funds would now not be released until a viable scheme was in place;
- The ICT investment was connected with the Universal Customer Contact Fundamental Service Review and the Customer Experience Software which would improve the Council's website and make it easier for customers to transact online. The investment would deliver savings through increased online self service which cost considerably less than transactions undertaken face to face;
- The carbon management programme had delivered a 26% reduction in the Council's CO2 emissions, the project was now improving the lighting in the multi storey car parks;
- The amber status of the Castle Museum project was due to the profiling of the expenditure and the complex nature of the contract rather than any significant delay in the timescales for the completion of work;
- The Creative Business Hub project involved a number of partners with differing requirements and some additional requests from Essex County Council had needed to be taken into account;
- The Pumping Main at Distillery Lane/Haven Road was subject to an engineering report being reviewed.

RESOLVED that the level of capital spending during 2013/14, and forecasts for future years be noted.

36. Financial Monitoring Report – April to September 2013

Councillors Bentley and Harris (in respect of their being members of Essex County Council) declared their non-pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

A report was submitted by the Assistant Chief Executive inviting the Panel to review the financial performance of all General Fund services and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the first six months of 2013/14.

Councillor Paul Smith, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, together with Sean Plummer, Finance Manager, attended the meeting and explained that the projected outturn for the General Fund was currently a net overspend of £338k, with the HRA forecast outturn position being an underspend of £100k. The net position showed a variance against profiled budget for General Fund Services (excluding benefits) of £512k, comprising total expenditure being £926k lower than expected and less income than expected, totalling £414k. The forecast outturn for all service areas showed a net overspend of £588k, primarily due to less income being received than budgeted for, mainly within Operational Services partially offset by cost savings in other service areas.

It was explained that at the end of June other risks, both positive and negative to the outturn position, were not shown at that time. A number of these had now been reflected in the outturn forecast allowing a more realistic view of current pressures to be shown. The budget included a number of corporate and technical budget areas such as net interest earnings, the provision to repay debt, pension costs and some non-service specific grants. The forecast remained that there would still be an underspend of £150k in respect of net interest budget. A further saving of around £100k was also predicted for ICT costs in respect of the Universal Customer Contact Fundamental Service Review.

The Cabinet budget report set out the arrangements, issues and risks associated with the introduction of the local retention of business rates. The budget proposals were based on the initial baseline funding level for 2013/14. These estimated figures compared to the most recent forecast for this year showed additional income to the Council of £110k. However at this stage, this needed to be treated with caution as final figures would not be known until after the year end when Government returns were required. In addition, the report on the Local Council Tax Support scheme showed the current cost of the scheme was within budget estimates and overall collection rates were better than had been assumed.

The forecast outturn therefore showed a potential net overspend of £338k, but with an expectation that further favourable budget changes (including Council Tax income and retained business rates) would result in an outturn position that would be close to a broadly neutral position. It was also reported that balances were currently £242k above the recommended level.

The HRA was showing a net underspend of £333k compared to the budget for the same period which was primarily due to lower expenditure on Premises costs (£173k) and Supplies & Services costs (£73k) with £86k more income than anticipated. The current projected outturn for the HRA was that it would be underspent by £100k, taking into account the additional rent and service charge income received to date.

The following issues were raised by Panel members:

- Councillor Oxford – the current income position in relation to car parking and Colchester Leisure World and whether the underspend on Bed and Breakfast and Homelessness costs was as a result of particular initiative by the service;
- Councillor Harris – whether the reduction in rental income from garage sites had been taken into account and the reasons behind the additional rent and service charge income to the HRA;
- Councillor Harrington – whether the underspend on HRA repairs and maintenance was a problem related to the delivery of the service.

In response to issues raised, the following information was provided:

- Income from car parks was 95% of the level in 2012/13 at this time of year which was attributed to people making good use of the special offer rates;
- Income at Colchester Leisure World had been negatively impacted as a result of the warm weather in the summer months which had resulted in fewer customers using the pool;
- The reduced income from garages had been taken into account although there were high numbers of void garages in any event;
- The additional rent income to the HRA was due to Colchester Borough Homes void housing rates having declined, combined with an increase in the number of tenants paying their rent on time and fewer Right to Buy applications being received;
- The underspend on HRA repairs and maintenance was mainly a problem of timing of expenditure against the profile rather than an issue of service delivery;
- The underspend on Bed and Breakfast and Homelessness costs had been due to specific actions taken to prevent homelessness as well as new units and family homes becoming available for occupation.

RESOLVED that the financial performance of General Fund Services and the Housing Revenue Account in the first six months of 2013/14 be noted.

37. Work Programme

The Panel considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive setting out the current Work Programme for the Panel for 2013-14.

The report on the Homelessness Strategy had been moved to the meeting on 11 February 2014 and the request for a review of IT which had been approved at the meeting on 29 October 2013 would be reflected in the next work programme report. It was explained that potential re-scheduling of other items on the work programme was

not feasible at this stage.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Work Programme be noted.

Scrutiny Panel

10 December 2013

Item
10

Report of	Assistant Chief Executive	Author	Amanda Chidgey
Title	Work Programme 2013-14		☎ 282227
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report sets out the current Work Programme 2013-2014 for the Scrutiny Panel.

1. Decisions Required

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the contents Panel's Work Programme for 2013-14.

2. Alternative options

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

3. Supporting Information

- 3.1 The Panel's work programme will evolve as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting the opportunity is taken for the work programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances.
- 3.2 At the last meeting of the Panel, following a request from the Councillor Willetts, the Panel agreed to include in the work programme a review of the Council's overall IT provision in respect of the financial costs, practicalities, project management and milestones and this has been scheduled in for the meeting in March 2014.
- 3.3 In the light of recent developments in relation to Colchester Hospital, information is currently awaited from the Hospital Trust regarding the attendance of the Chief Executive and Chairman of the Board at the Panel meeting in January 2014.

4. Strategic Plan References

- 4.1 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

5. Standard References

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

WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14

Meeting date / agenda items and relevant portfolio
11 June 2013 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 2012-13 Year-end Performance Report and SPAP (Leader / Head of Community Services)2. 2012-13 Revenue Expenditure Monitoring Report3. 2012-13 Capital Expenditure Monitoring Report
2 July 2013 (extra) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. New Housing Arrangements (Housing / Head of Commercial Services) deferred from 11 June 2013
23 July 2013 (briefing 18 July, 5pm, S11 Rowan House) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pre-scrutinise the Portfolio Holder decision 'To Close the Abbots Activity Centre' (Community and Leisure)2. Budget Strategy, Timetable and MTF (Leader / Business and Resources)3. Annual Report on Treasury Management (Business and Resources)
20 August 2013 (briefing 14 August, 5pm, S11 Rowan House) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 2013-14 Capital Monitor, period April – June2. 2013-14 Financial Monitor, period April – June
10 September 2013 (briefing 5 September, 5pm, S11 Rowan House) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee) (Planning and Community Safety)2. firstsite project: Final Overview (Scrutiny Panel)(I Vipond, Strategic Director)
29 October 2013 (briefing 24 October, 5pm, S11 Rowan House) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Corporate and Financial Management FSR - Pre Cabinet scrutiny of Business Case (Leader)2. Report of urgent decision where call-in does not apply
12 November 2013 (briefing 7 November, 4.30pm, S11 Rowan House) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Call-in – Allotment Charges and Review of Tenancy Agreements2. Localising Council Tax Support (follow-up on 2012-13 implementation review)3. 2013-14 Revenue Monitor, period April – September4. 2013-14 Capital Monitor, period April – September
10 December 2013 (briefing 4 December, 5pm, S11 Rowan House) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review of Parking Services in Colchester (Street and Waste Services) Presentation from Head of Operational Services and North Essex Parking Partnership Group Manager2. Treasury Management – Half yearly update

3. 2013-14 6-monthly Performance report and Strategic Plan Action Plan (Leader / Business and Resources)

28 January 2014 (briefing 23 January, 5pm, S11 Rowan House)

1. Review of Colchester Hospital (Dr Coutts and Dr Irvine to attend)
2. 2014/15 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and MTF (Pre-scrutiny of Cabinet Decision (Leader / Business and Resources)
3. Treasury Management Investment Strategy

11 February 2014 (briefing 6 February, 5pm, S11 Rowan House)

1. 2013-14 Capital Monitor, period April – December
2. 2013-14 Revenue Monitor, period April – December
3. Homelessness Strategy (Colchester Borough Homes)

18 March 2014 (briefing 13 March, 5pm, S11 Rowan House)

1. Colchester Community Stadium Limited review (last review 20 March 2012)(Leader)
2. Review of Council's overall IT provision including financial costs, practicalities, project management and milestones.



Scrutiny Panel

Item
11a

10 December 2013

Report of	Assistant Chief Executive	Author	Amanda Chidgey
Title	Parking Services in Colchester		☎ 282227
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report gives details of the review of Parking Services in Colchester

1. Decisions Required

- 1.1 To consider the presentation to the Panel delivered jointly by Matthew Young, Head of Operational Services and Richard Walker, North Essex Parking Partnership Group Manager.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Panel in August 2013, following a request by Councillor Hayes, supported by Councillor Bentley, it was agreed that a review of parking services would be added to the panel's work programme.
- 2.2 Discussion at that meeting indicated that the review was intended to include consideration of :
 - Whether the provision of parking services in Colchester is compliant with the Local Transport Plan
 - Whether Colchester's parking policy is helping Colchester businesses and residents, and helping to transform the town centre
 - What the benefits of the North Essex Parking Partnership are to Colchester (including financial)
 - An understanding of the decision making process (to include the relationship between NEPP and ECC).

3. Format

- 3.1 Councillor Martin Hunt, Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services will introduce the item.
- 3.2 There will be a joint presentation from Matthew Young, Head of Operational Services and Richard Walker, North Essex Parking Partnership Group Manager.
- 3.3 Councillor Robert Mitchell, Chairman of the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee has accepted the Panel's invitation to attend the meeting and participate with the Panel in open discussion.
- 3.4 Councillor Rodney Bass, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation, Essex County Council was also invited to attend the meeting but has indicated he is unable to do so.

4. Strategic Plan References

- 4.1 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

5. Standard References

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



Scrutiny Panel

Item
11b

10 December 2013

Report of	Head of Operational Services	Author	Matthew Young ☎ 282902
Title	Review of Parking Services in Colchester		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

The Panel is invited to review Parking Services in Colchester including the services provided by the North Essex Parking Partnership

1. Action required

- 1.1 The panel is asked to consider the presentation on the Parking Service in Colchester and the services provided to it by the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP)

2. Reason for scrutiny

- 2.1 The presentation was requested by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in August 2013.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The presentation will cover the following matters:

- National Parking legislation and guidance
- Local priorities for the Parking Service
- The functions and finances of the NEPP

- 3.2 The presentation will use PowerPoint slides and handouts will be provided

4. Strategic Plan references

- 4.1 An effective Parking service will contribute to the priorities of promoting sustainability and reducing congestions as well as improving opportunities for local businesses and retail to thrive.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 5.1 There are no particular equality, diversity or human rights implications. This is covered in the original EQIA for the Service. The EQIA can be found here:

http://www.colchester.gov.uk/Info_page_two_pic_2_det.asp?art_id=7977&sec_id=1988

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 To help the Panel the latest financial position that was presented to the Joint Committee is shown in Appendix A. A deficit of £21,000 was forecast for the year at that stage, although the position is being closely monitored and in period seven the account did show a small surplus.
- 6.2 PCN income received was short of the revised profiled budget target by £8,000 at the end of September.
- 6.3 Table A below compared PCN cash received in the first half of 2012/2013 to the same period in 2013/2014. Overall income from PCN's is greater by £186,745 although income levels in Epping were lower than in 2012.

Table A	Periods 1-6 2012/2013	Periods 1-6 2013/2014	Increase (decrease)
Colchester	£235,747	£329,234	£93,487
Braintree	£75,508	£86,624	£11,116
Harlow	£85,469	£175,504	£90,035
Tendring	£88,432	£135,702	£47,270
Uttlesford	£45,273	£62,756	£17,483
Epping*	£196,891	£124,245	(£72,646)
	£727,320	£914,065	£186,745

- 6.4 Appendix B is a chart showing on-street PCN income for the current year against profiled budget and income levels achieved in 2012/2013.
- 6.5 Appendix C is a chart showing PCN income in 2013/2014 compared to 2012/2013 by individual authority.

7. Other Standard References

- 7.1 As this is an information report there are no publicity; financial; health and safety; community safety and risk management implications

Background Papers

North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Agreement, 2011

Appendix A: On-street report at period 6 2013/2014

On-street Account	2013/2014 Actual to date	2013/2014 Budget to date	2013/2014 Variance to date	2013/2014 Forecast	2013/2014 Annual budget	2013/2014 Projected variance	Note
Expenditure							
Direct costs							
Employee costs:							
Management	28	28	-	55	55	-	
CEO's & Supervision	560	581	(21)	1,074	1,162	(89)	A
Back Office	132	135	(3)	273	270	3	
TRO's	40	40	-	80	80	-	
Premises costs	5	7	(2)	9	9	-	
Transport costs (running costs)	15	11	3	33	24	10	B
Supplies & Services	88	82	6	237	238	(1)	C
Third Party Payments	12	12	1	28	28	-	
	<u>880</u>	<u>896</u>	<u>(16)</u>	<u>1,789</u>	<u>1,866</u>	<u>(77)</u>	
Non-direct costs							
Accommodation	32	32	-	64	64	-	
Other Support Services	91	91	-	150	150	-	
Cash Office & Receipting & Postage	17	17	-	44	33	11	D
Communications	10	10	-	20	20	-	
Fleet contract hire	20	20	-	59	48	11	E
IT	38	38	-	76	76	-	
	<u>207</u>	<u>207</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>391</u>	<u>22</u>	
	<u>1,087</u>	<u>1,103</u>	<u>(16)</u>	<u>2,202</u>	<u>2,257</u>	<u>(55)</u>	
Income							
Penalty Charges (PCN's)	(789)	(797)	8	(1,623)	(1,713)	90	F
Parking Permits/Season Tickets	(202)	(193)	(9)	(404)	(386)	(18)	G
Parking Charges (P&D etc)	(77)	(79)	2	(154)	(158)	4	H
Other income	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	<u>(1,068)</u>	<u>(1,068)</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>(2,181)</u>	<u>(2,257)</u>	<u>76</u>	
Total Income	<u>19</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>(15)</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>21</u>	
Deficit / (Surplus)							

Notes

A Savings in enforcement staff costs, net of severance pay (70% attributable to on-street account).

B Cost pressure on fuel.

C Cost pressure on mobile phones, mitigated by other savings in on-street account.

D Cost pressure on postage.

E Cost pressure on fleet costs.

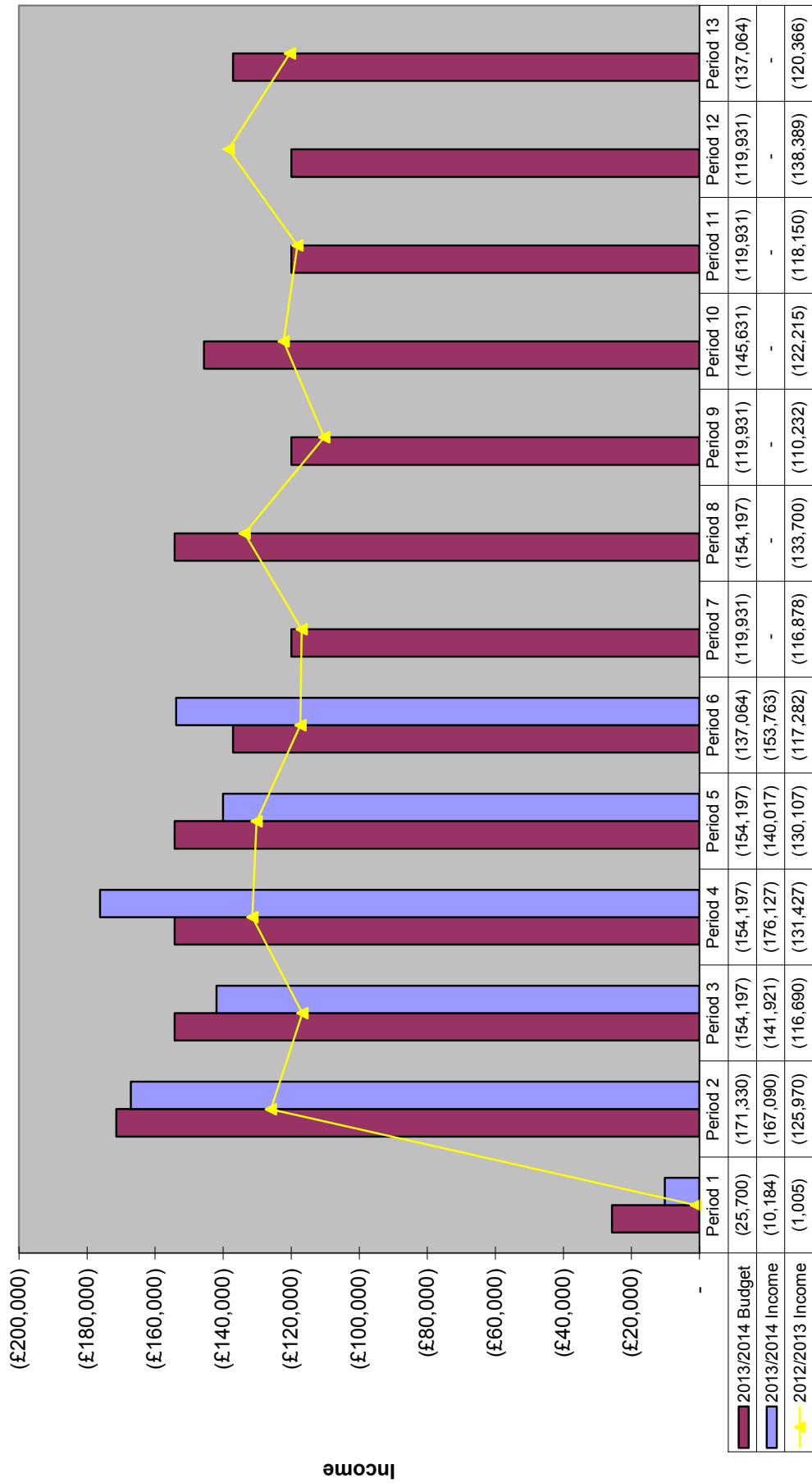
F Income from penalty charge notices - projection based on recent trends.

G Income from season tickets / permits expected to be slightly above budget for the year.

H Income from P&D expected to be slightly down due to proposed changes at Harwich Quay.

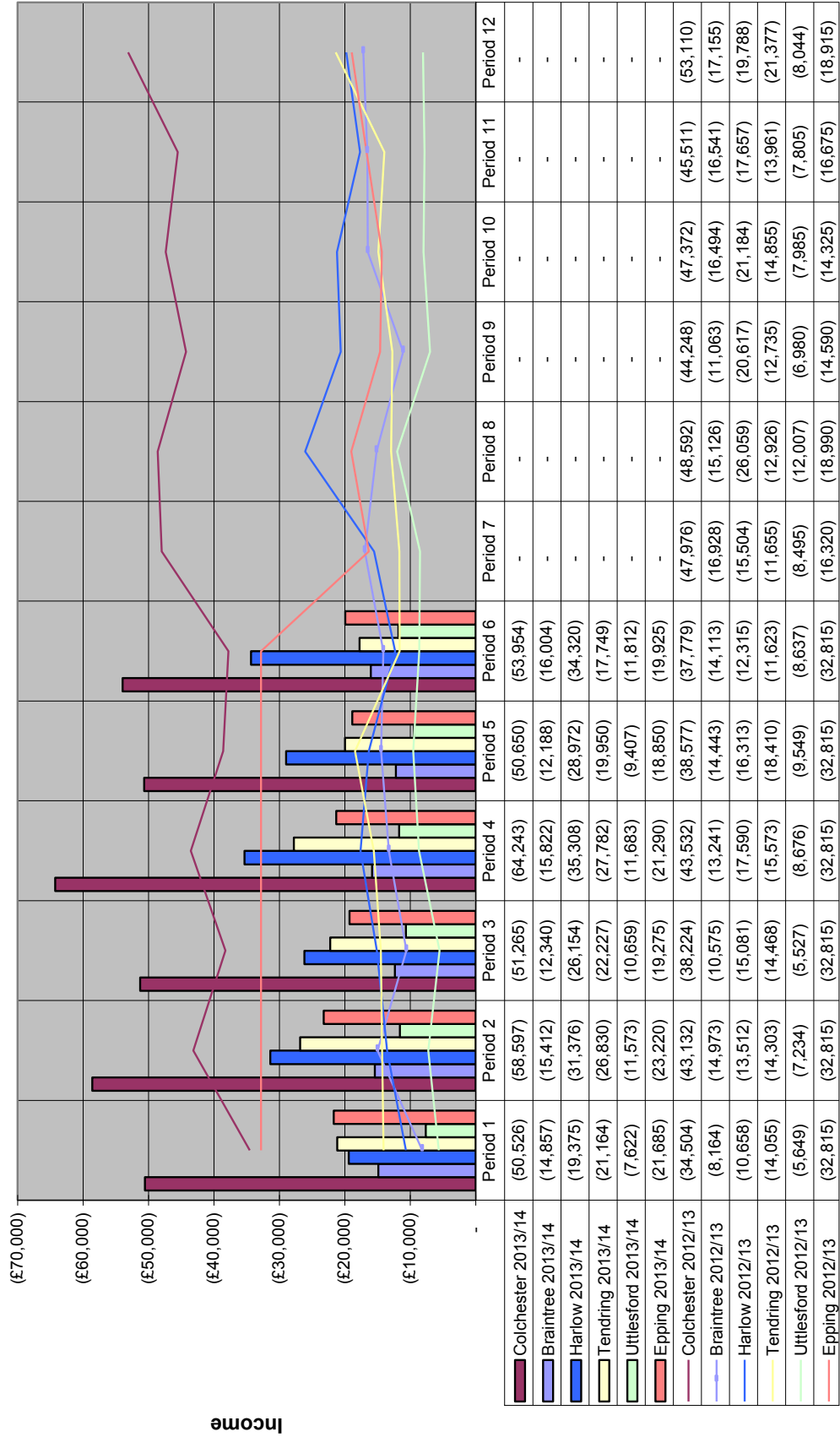
Appendix B: On-street PCN income 2013/2014 compared to profiled budget and 2012/2013 income (print in colour)

NEPP on-street PCN income 2012/2013 comparison to 2013/2014 budget and actual income



Appendix C: On-street PCN income 2013/2014 compared to 2012/2013 income by district – print in colour

NEPP on-street PCN income 2013/14 income compared to 2012/13



Scrutiny Panel

10 December 2013

Item
12

Report of	Assistant Chief Executive	Author	Steve Heath
Title	Treasury Management Strategy Statement – Mid-Year Review Report 2013/14		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

The Panel is invited to review treasury management performance for the first six months of 2013/14

1. Action required

- 1.1 To note the activities relating to treasury management for the first six months of 2013/14 and consider performance.

2. Reason for scrutiny

- 2.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) revised Code of Practice on Treasury Management was adopted by this Council on 17 February 2010. The primary requirements of the Code include the creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices, the production of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement for the year ahead, a **Mid-year Review Report** and an Annual Report covering activities during the previous year. This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on treasury Management.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 The Council operates a balanced budget, which broadly means that income raised during the year will meet its expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure that the cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low risk counterparties, providing adequate security and liquidity before considering investment returns.
- 3.2 The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer term cash flow planning to ensure the Council can meet its capital spending operations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses, and on occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.
- 3.3 Treasury management is defined as "The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."
- 3.4 The Council employ Capita Asset Services (formerly Sector Treasury) to provide a consultancy service in respect of treasury management, to include advice on both

debt and investments. During the year they have provided advice on borrowing, investments, counterparty credit details and general capital accounting information.

4. Economic update

Performance to date

- 4.1 During 2013/14 economic indicators have suggested that the economy is recovering, albeit from a low level. After avoiding recession in the first quarter of 2013, with a 0.3% quarterly expansion the economy grew by 0.7% in Q2. There were signs of renewed vigour in household spending in the summer, with a further pick-up in retail sales, mortgages, house prices and new car registrations.
- 4.2 The strengthening in economic growth appears to have supported the labour market, with employment rising at a modest pace and strong enough to reduce the level of unemployment further. Excluding bonuses, earnings rose by just 1.0% y/y, well below the rate of inflation at 2.7% in August, causing continuing pressure on household's disposable income.
- 4.3 The Bank of England extended its Funding for Lending Scheme (FLS) into 2015 and sharpened the incentives for banks to extend more business funding. To date, the mortgage market still appears to have been the biggest beneficiary from the scheme, with mortgage interest rates falling further to new lows. Together with the Government's Help to Buy scheme this is helping to boost demand in the housing market. Mortgage approvals by high street banks have risen as have house prices, although they are still well down from the boom years pre 2008.
- 4.4 Public borrowing in Q2 started to slowly come down as Government expenditure cuts took effect and economic growth started to show through in a small increase in tax receipts. Bank Rate remained at 0.5% and quantitative easing also stayed at £375bn. In August, the MPC provided forward guidance that Bank Rate is unlikely to change until unemployment first falls to 7%, which was not expected until 2016. However, 7% is only a point at which the MPC will review Bank Rate, not necessarily take action to change it. The three month to July average rate was 7.7%.
- 4.5 CPI inflation (MPC target of 2.0%), fell marginally from a peak of 2.9% in June to 2.7% in August. The Bank of England expects inflation to fall back to 2.0% in 2015.
- 4.6 Tensions in the Eurozone eased over the second quarter, but there remained a number of triggers for a renewed flare-up. Economic survey data improved consistently over the first half of the year, pointing to a return to growth in Q2, so ending six quarters of Eurozone recession.

Outlook

- 4.7 Economic forecasting remains difficult with so many external influences weighing on the UK. The overall balance of risks to economic recovery is now weighted to the upside after five months of robust good news on the economy. However, only time will tell just how long this period of strong economic growth will last, and it remains exposed to vulnerabilities in a number of key areas. The longer run trend is for gilt yields and PWLB rates to rise, due to the high volume of gilt issuance in the UK, and of bond issuance in other major western countries. Near-term, there is some residual risk of further QE if there is a dip in strong growth or if the MPC were to decide to take action to combat the market's expectations of an early first increase in Bank Rate. If the MPC does take action to do more QE in order to reverse the rapid increase in market rates, especially in gilt yields and interest rates up to 10 years, such action could cause gilt yields and PWLB rates over the next year or two to significantly undershoot forecasts.

4.8 The latest Capita Asset Services interest rate forecast is shown in **Appendix A**. Financial markets have aggressively raised short term interest rates and gilt yields due to their view that the strength of economic recovery is now so rapid that unemployment will fall much faster than the Bank of England forecasts. They therefore expect the first increase in Bank Rate to be in quarter 4 of 2014. Capita Asset Services take the view that the MPC view is more realistic. The prospects for any increase in Bank Rate before 2016 are therefore seen as being limited. However, some forecasters are stating that even the Bank of England forecast is too optimistic and so do not expect the first increase in Bank Rate until spring 2017.

5. Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2013/14

5.1 The Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2013/14 was approved by full Council on 20 February 2013. The strategy is as follows:

- The UK bank rate has been unchanged from a historically low 0.5% since March 2009. The view from the Council's treasury advisers is that the growth prospects for the UK economy are expected to remain weak, with very limited prospects for any changes in the Bank Rate before 2015.
- The Council currently has an under-borrowed position. The borrowing strategy is to reduce the difference between gross and net debt by continuing to 'borrow internally', which is primarily due to investment rates on offer being lower than long term borrowing rates. This has the advantages of maximising short-term savings and reducing the Council's exposure to interest rate and credit risk. This approach is intended to be maintained during the year.
- The investment policy reflects the Council's low appetite for risk, emphasising the priorities of security and liquidity over that of yield. The main features of the policy are as follows:
 - The Council will only invest with institutions with the highest credit ratings, taking into account the views of all credit rating agencies and other market data when making investment decisions.
 - The Council will use Sector Treasury's creditworthiness service, which combines data from credit rating agencies with credit default swaps and sovereign ratings. However, whereas this service uses ratings from all agencies in a weighted scoring system, the Council will continue to follow the approach suggested by CIPFA of using the lowest rating from all the agencies (i.e. the lowest common denominator).
 - The Council will only use approved counterparties from countries with the highest credit rating of 'AAA', together with those from the UK.
 - The Council will continue to avoid longer term deals while investment rates are at such low levels, unless attractive rates are available within the risk parameters set by the Council. The suggested budgeted return on investments placed for up to three months during the year is 0.50%.
- The Council's Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2013/14 through to 2015/16 were produced to support capital expenditure and treasury management decision making, and are designed to inform whether planned borrowing and the resultant revenue costs are affordable and within sustainable limits. They take into account all the economic forecasts and proposed borrowing and investment activity detailed in the TMSS.
- The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement for 2013/14 stated that the historic debt liability will continue to be charged at 4%, with the charge for more recent capital expenditure being based on the useful life of the asset and charged using the equal annual instalment method.

5.2 There are no proposed policy changes to the TMSS for 2013/14. The details in this report update the position in the light of the latest economic performance.

6. The Council's Capital Position (Prudential Indicators)

6.1 This part of the report is structured to update:

- The Council's capital expenditure plans;
- How these plans are being financed;
- The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
- Compliance with the limits in place for borrowing activity.

6.2 The table below shows the original estimates for capital expenditure when the Prudential Indicators were agreed, along with the latest forecast. The borrowing element of the table increases the underlying indebtedness of the Council by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), although this will be reduced in part by revenue charges for the repayment of debt (the Minimum Revenue Provision).

	Original Estimate	Current Position	Revised Estimate
Capital Expenditure 2013/14	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total Spend	19,300	6,800	24,807
Total Financing	19,236	6,800	23,808
Borrowing Need	64	0	999

6.3 The following table shows the CFR, which denotes the underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. It also shows two further prudential indicators relating to the level of borrowing. The **Operational Boundary** reflects the Council's expected debt position during the year, whilst the **Authorised Limit** controls the overall level beyond which borrowing is prohibited. This is the statutory limit determined by section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003, and reflects a level of borrowing that could be afforded in the short-term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. The table demonstrates that the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit during the first six months of 2013/14.

	Original Estimate	Current Position	Revised Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Capital Financing Requirement			
CFR - non housing	29,147	26,693	26,619
CFR - housing	124,577	124,577	124,577
Total CFR (year end position)	153,724	151,270	151,196
Net movement in CFR	2,454	0	(74)
The Operational Boundary			
Borrowing	142,740	136,094	142,740
Other long term liabilities	0	0	0
Total	142,740	136,094	142,740
The Authorised Limit			
Borrowing	153,724	151,270	153,724
Other long term liabilities	15,400	15,100	15,400
Total	169,124	166,370	169,124

6.4 One key control over the treasury activity is a prudential indicator to ensure that over the medium term, net borrowing (borrowings less investments) will only be for a capital purpose. Gross external borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2013/14 and the next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for

limited early borrowing for future years. No difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with this prudential indicator.

	Original Estimate	Current Position	Revised Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000
External Borrowing	142,740	136,094	136,094
Plus other long term liabilities	0	2,058	2,058
Gross Borrowing	142,740	138,152	138,152
CFR (year end position)	153,724	151,270	151,196

7. Borrowing

- 7.1 When the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing) or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions. The Council has borrowings of £136m and has utilised £13.5m of cash flow funds in lieu of borrowing. This is a prudent and cost effective approach in the current economic climate, but will require ongoing monitoring in the event that the upside risk to gilt yields prevails.
- 7.2 No new long-term or temporary borrowing has been undertaken so far this financial year in accordance with the TMSS. The general trend in PWLB interest rates has been an increase during the six months across all maturity bands. However, it is anticipated that no new borrowing will be undertaken during this financial year.
- 7.3 Debt rescheduling opportunities have been limited in the current economic climate and consequent structure of interest rates. No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the first six months of 2013/14.

8. Investments

- 8.1 In accordance with the Code, it is the Council's priority to ensure security of capital and liquidity, and to obtain an appropriate level of return which is consistent with the Council's risk appetite. It is a very difficult investment market in terms of earning the level of interest rates commonly seen in previous decades as rates are very low and in line with the 0.5% Bank Rate. Indeed, the introduction of the Funding for Lending scheme has reduced market investment rates even further. The potential for a prolonging of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, and its impact on banks, prompts a low risk and short term strategy. Given this risk averse environment, investment returns are likely to remain low.
- 8.2 The Council held £37.0m of investments as at 30 September 2013 (£21.6m at 31 March 2013) and the investment portfolio yield for the first six months of the year is 0.54% against the three-month LIBID benchmark of 0.38%. A full list of investments held as at 30 September 2013 is shown in **Appendix B**. It should be noted that the level of investments held, and therefore the total returns available, are likely to reduce during the remainder of the year as a result of cash flow fluctuations and the continuing strategy of internal borrowing.
- 8.3 The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function. Officers can confirm that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the first six months of 2013/14.

8.4 The Council's budgeted investment return for 2013/14 is £100k, and performance for the year to date is expected to be above budget.

9. Icelandic Investments

9.1 The Council invested a total of £4m in Icelandic banks in September 2008, which suffered a default following the collapse of the Icelandic banking system. The impairments recognised in the 2010/11 accounts reflected the guidance issued by CIPFA in May 2011. The level of the impairment was reduced in the 2012/13 accounts to reflect updated guidance from CIPFA, which takes into account the Council's preferred creditor status and the distributions received.

9.2 The Landsbanki winding up board made a fourth distribution to creditors in September 2013, making the total distribution approximately 53% of the claim. The current position on estimated future payouts is based on recovering 100p in the £. However, the administration of the insolvent estate of the bank is likely to continue for several years, which creates a level of uncertainty around the timing of recoveries through the administration process. Members will be kept updated on the latest developments on these efforts.

10. Strategic Plan references

10.1 Prudent treasury management underpins the budget required to deliver all Strategic Plan priorities.

11. Publicity considerations

11.1 **Appendix B** to the attached background paper is confidential.

12. Financial implications

12.1 The Central Loans and Investment Account (CLIA) comprises the Council's borrowing costs and investment income. The CLIA is difficult to predict and can be affected by several factors. The majority of the Council's debt is on fixed rates reflecting the longer-term nature of the borrowing decisions. Investments are generally made for shorter periods, making returns more variable. This mix is generally more beneficial when interest rates are high or increasing. It is important to add that the exposure to interest rate movements is regularly monitored to minimise risks to changes in returns.

12.2 The outturn position for the CLIA is currently projected to be a favourable variance of £150k, with a risk to the downside. The main factors affecting the forecast are the intention to continue to internally borrow due to the low levels of investment returns available, and a higher than expected level of cash balances available. The position will continue to be reviewed as part of the regular budget monitoring reports.

13. Risk Management implications

13.1 Risk Management is essential to effective treasury management. The Council's Treasury Management Policy Statement contains a section on treasury Risk Management (TMP1).

13.2 TMP1 covers the following areas of risk all of which are considered as part of our treasury management activities:

- Credit and counterparty risk
- Liquidity risk

- Interest rate risk
- Exchange rate risk
- Refinancing risk
- Legal and regulatory risk
- Fraud, error and corruption, and contingency management
- Market risk

14. Other Standard References

14.1 Having considered consultation, equality, diversity and human rights, health and safety and community safety implications, there are none which are significant to the matters in this report.

Background Papers

Appendix A: Economic Forecast

Appendix B: Outstanding Temporary Investments 2013/14 (**confidential**)

Interest Rate Forecasts

	Sep 2013	Dec 2013	Mar 2014	Jun 2014	Sep 2014	Dec 2014	Mar 2015	Jun 2015	Sep 2015	Dec 2015	Mar 2016	Jun 2016	Sep 2016	Dec 2016	Mar 2017
Bank Rate	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.25
5yr PWLB Rate	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.60	2.70	2.70	2.80	2.80	2.90	3.00	3.10	3.20	3.30	3.40	3.40
10yr PWLB Rate	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.70	3.80	3.80	3.90	3.90	4.00	4.10	4.20	4.30	4.30	4.40	4.50
25yr PWLB Rate	4.40	4.40	4.40	4.50	4.50	4.60	4.60	4.70	4.80	4.90	5.00	5.10	5.10	5.10	5.10
50yr PWLB Rate	4.40	4.40	4.40	4.50	4.50	4.60	4.70	4.80	4.90	5.00	5.10	5.20	5.20	5.20	5.20



Scrutiny Panel

Item
13

10 December 2013

Report of	Assistant Chief Executive	Author	Matthew Sterling ☎ 282577
Title	Half-yearly Performance Report including progress on Strategic Plan Action Plan		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

The Panel is invited to consider the performance report for the period up to the end of September 2013. This includes progress of our performance measures and an update of progress of the Strategic Plan Action Plan.

Scrutiny Panel is asked to review and comment on this report, ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 29 January 2014.

The draft Cabinet report is attached.



Cabinet

Item

29 January 2014

Report of	Assistant Chief Executive	Author	Matthew Sterling 📞 282577
Title	Half yearly Performance Report including progress on Strategic Plan Action Plan - Draft for Scrutiny		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

Cabinet is invited to consider performance against the Council's key performance measures and the Strategic Plan Action Plan as at the end of September 2013.

1. Action required

The Cabinet is asked to consider and comment on the performance update for the Council's key performance measures for the period to the end of September 2013 (Appendix 1), and on the progress update of the Strategic Plan Action Plan to the end of September 2013 (Appendix 2).

The Scrutiny Panel reviewed the report on 10 December 2013, and Cabinet is also asked to consider any comments from that scrutiny.

2. Background information

The Council has agreed a number of key performance areas which it uses as part of its Performance Management Framework to help monitor progress and improvement. This report provides an update of our indicators along with a half-yearly review of progress against our Strategic Plan Action Plan (see Appendix 1 and 2 attached).

3. Performance Summary

- Progress towards achieving our overall set of organisational performance measures shows that 13 (65%) of our measures are on track to be achieved (or 'green'), 4 (20%) are not meeting expectations to date but with improvement likely ('amber'), and 3 (15%) are not meeting expectations and unlikely to do so by the year-end ('red').
- The actions within our Strategic Plan Action Plan show that there is a considerable amount of positive activity being undertaken across the Council and with our partners to achieve our Strategic Priorities.
- The Council has also received a number of awards and accreditations highlighted at the end of Appendix 1.

4. Strategic Plan references

This report provides an update of progress against the Strategic Plan Action Plan, developed to support the delivery of the Council's agreed Strategic Plan Priorities.

5. Consultation

The report's contents do not have any direct implications with regard to consultation. However, the Strategic Plan and priorities were agreed following public consultation.

6. Publicity considerations

The performance report contains key measures for our key performance indicators and our Strategic Plan Action Plan. Many of these are used to monitor the performance of our services, and as such these may be of public interest. The report and related information is published on the [Performance and Improvement](#) section of the Council's website.

7. Financial implications

The financial implications of the action plans to deliver the indicators form part of the budget setting process.

8. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

Progress and improvement of these and many of the actions within the Strategic Plan Action Plan support our aims of improving both services and the lives of everyone in the borough. Where required, specific Equality Impact Assessments will exist for policies and activities rather than for individual performance indicators or actions. Progress on the Council's Equality Objectives are included within the Strategic Plan Action Plan Update.

9. Community Safety implications

There are performance measures and actions within the Strategic Plan Action Plan which aim to improve community safety and as such this report provides progress updates in this area.

10. Health and Safety implications

This report has no direct implications with regard to Health and Safety.

11. Risk Management implications

We aim to deliver against performance indicators and the Strategic Plan Action Plan Actions, as both form a key part of our performance framework and expectations around delivery of our priorities to the residents of Colchester borough.

Background Papers

Not applicable.

2013/14 Corporate Indicator				
Indicator	Target 2013/14	Q2 April - Sept 2013	RAG	Service Comments
				Appendix 1

Planning Key Indicators

KI P1 Processing of planning applications <i>Monitored quarterly</i>	Majors 65%	71.4%	G	Performance is now above target for Majors and Minors, but we have seen a slight dip in performance for Other applications. This may be due in part to the rise in workload when compared to previous years (852 decisions this year to date against 738 for the same period in 2012) but we expect to be on target by the end of the year.
	Minors 70%	70.6%	G	
	Others 85%	83.7%	A	
KI P2 Planning appeals allowed against our decision to refuse <i>Monitored quarterly</i>	30% maximum	10.7%	G	Despite increasing numbers of challenges being raised against the Council's planning decisions, appeal success continues (28 appeals for this period against 20 for the same period in 2012). This shows that our decision making is sound and robust. Early analysis of trends indicates that a significant proportion of appeals made are as a result of the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework, although it should be noted that our high success rate and the specific comments made in some Inspectors' decisions provide support for CBC's current Policy Framework.

Benefits Key Indicators

KI B1 Time to process housing benefit new claims and changes <i>Monitored weekly</i>	14 days	17 days	A	Processing days are currently 3 days over the target. Factors contributing to this relate to staff resources in the service and some system issues. Both are being addressed to bring us back to the target by year end.
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2013/14 Corporate Indicator

Indicator	Target 2013/14	Q2 April - Sept 2013	RAG	Service Comments
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Housing Key Indicators

KI H1 Net additional homes provided <i>Monitored quarterly</i>	785	213 (Q1 only – Q2 tbc; see notes)	A	<p>An updated figure of 213 units is to be recorded for the first quarter (previously recorded as 147 units) which now includes all information from CBC Building Control as well as the April, May and June return from NHBC which were previously not available.</p> <p>For the period April-September a total of 277 additional homes have been completed in the borough. For the second quarter, the Council is waiting on information from the NHBC for August and September so the figure for July-September is 64 units (recorded by CBC Building Control and the NHBC return for July). This is lower than to be expected but awaits the NHBC return for August and September.</p>
KI H2 Affordable homes delivered (gross) <i>Monitored quarterly</i>	400 (three-year target for 2012-15)	25	G	<p>By the end of September 2013, 25 new affordable homes were delivered (9 at Layer Road 2 at Severalls Hospital Site and 14 at Garrison). These 25 units are in line with expected delivery for this year, which is predicted to deliver the greatest number of units in quarter 3 and quarter 4.</p> <p>In 2012/13 a total of 133 homes were delivered. The 25 new homes in 2013/14 to date brings the total to 158 out of a three-year target of 400. This means that we have delivered 40% of the overall target, but with the additional homes to be delivered in the second half of the year, we are on track to deliver 400 homes.</p>
KI H3 Homelessness cases prevented <i>Monitored quarterly</i>	350	278	G	<p>137 households had their homelessness prevented in the past 3 months which, when added to the first quarter figure of 141 gives a total of 278 for the mid-year point. The Housing Options team continues to operate an increased appointment rota as demand for appointments is higher than normal for this time of year. This is creating workload pressures, but the quality of case work and people management within the team means we remain confident that we will exceed this year's prevention target.</p>
KI H4 Rent Collected <i>Monitored monthly</i>	97%	97.2%	G	<p>The Tenancy Management team continues to commit a high level of resource to rent collection. The level of activity includes an increasing number of visits to tenants to support them with money and welfare benefit advice. Rent collection is exceeding its target despite a general growth of tenants in arrears. The main reason for the increase in arrears is delays in the assessment of Housing Benefit due to the time needed to collect income evidence.</p>

2013/14 Corporate Indicator			
Indicator	Target 2013/14	Q2 April - Sept 2013	RAG
			Service Comments

Housing key indicator delivered through Colchester Borough Homes

KI H5 Average time to re-let council houses <i>Monitored monthly</i>	General Needs 20 days	17 days	G	Re-let times for general needs and temporary accommodation voids have improved and the average number of days to re-let is achieving target. The number of Sheltered housing voids is reducing as some of the more difficult to let schemes are removed from housing stock (Abbeygate House and bedsits within Worsnop House). Over the quarter 5 sheltered voids have been re-let. Vacancies of bedsit accommodation at Harrison Court and Heathfields House have taken 175 and 252 days to re-let, and have had a detrimental impact on the overall performance of re-letting sheltered voids. The Extra Care units at The Cannons also impact the performance and for the period from April to September the average re-let time was 127 days. See note above.
	All Sheltered 75 days	100 days	R	
	<i>Extra Care Sheltered</i>	127 days		
	Temporary 30 days	30 days	G	

2013/14 Corporate Indicator				
Indicator	Target 2013/14	Q2 April - Sept 2013	RAG	Service Comments

Waste and Recycling Key Indicators

KI W1 Residual household waste per household <i>Monitored quarterly.</i>	430kg	109kg	G	There is a 1kg increase on the first quarter however, the target should be achieved. With the introduction of food waste collections we will be monitoring the effect on residual waste closely as this should have a significant impact.																								
KI W2 Household waste reused, recycled and composted <i>Monitored quarterly.</i>	43%	46.9%	G	Current recycling performance is in line with projections to meet the Council's annual target. For information, the most recent national picture is as at June 2012. The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) reported provisional figures for the first quarter of 2012/13 show that around six million tonnes (45.5%) of household waste was sent for recycling – 0.5 percentage points higher than the same period the year before (45%). When looked at in the context of the rolling year, to counteract any seasonal fluctuations, this means that 42.9% of household waste was recycled in the twelve months to June 2012 – virtually the same as was achieved in the 2011/12 financial year (42.8%).																								
KI W3 Number of weekly missed collections <i>Monitored weekly</i>	Blue week = 100 Green week = 80	see table	G	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Green Weeks</th> <th>Blue Weeks</th> <th>Actual Missed Collections</th> <th>Target</th> <th>Difference – actual v target</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>July</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>106</td> <td>360</td> <td>- 254</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>319</td> <td>460</td> <td>- 141</td> </tr> <tr> <td>September</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>330</td> <td>360</td> <td>- 30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Missed bin performance has continued to be better than target for both quarter 1 and 2</p>	Month	Green Weeks	Blue Weeks	Actual Missed Collections	Target	Difference – actual v target	July	2	2	106	360	- 254	August	2	3	319	460	- 141	September	2	2	330	360	- 30
Month	Green Weeks	Blue Weeks	Actual Missed Collections	Target	Difference – actual v target																							
July	2	2	106	360	- 254																							
August	2	3	319	460	- 141																							
September	2	2	330	360	- 30																							

2013/14 Corporate Indicator

Indicator	Target 2013/14	Q2 April - Sept 2013	RAG	Service Comments
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Resources and Organisational Key Indicators

KI R1 Council Tax collected <i>Monitored weekly</i>	97.5%	57.4%	G	Council Tax collection is currently on target to meet the 31 March collection target of 97.5%. Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LTCS) and new charges around discounts and exemptions will lower the collection, when comparing collection rates to this time last year. Some slight slippage on time taken to assess benefit claims could be also having a minor effect on collection to date, but this should be resolved over the next few months.
KI R2 % Business Rates (NDR) Collected <i>Monitored weekly</i>	97.5%	62.1%	G	NDR collection is currently on target to meet the 31 March collection target of 97.5%.
KI R3 Sickness rate in working days <i>Monitored monthly.</i>	7.5	9.05 days = 2.7 days short-term, and 6.7 days long-term.	R	We are currently well above the target of 7.5 days per person and there is a risk that the target will not be met this year. There has been a slight decrease however from a high of August of 9.6 days but we are now entering the season where sickness tends to increase. There has been a marked increase in Mental Health cases compared to Q2 in 2012/13 from 24.4% to 32%. This is the second year that there has been an increase in mental health absence. Emotional resilience training is to be rolled out to staff to specifically address mental health issues. This should support staff to manage their own personal resilience and also help managers to support staff who are showing early signs of anxiety, depression and stress. The aim of the training is to improve mental toughness during the UCC FSR and change programme. In addition we have agreed to explore some joint working with UNISON and external agencies to raise awareness amongst managers of mental health issues, its impact and how to apply our policies and interventions such as occupational health, to effectively manage mental health absence.

2013/14 Corporate Indicator

Indicator	Target 2013/14	Q2 April - Sept 2013	RAG	Service Comments
<p>KI R4 Forecast variance at year end – overall revenue budget <i>Monitored monthly</i></p>	-2% to +1%	+1.9 %	A	<p>The current forecast outturn reported to Scrutiny Panel shows a net overspend of just over £0.3m / +1.9%.</p> <p>Whilst there remain a number of risks and variables in the forecast, several of which are expected to reduce the outturn forecast and therefore we currently expect the year end position will be within the target range.</p>
<p>KI R5 Achieve Fundamental Service Review (FSR) savings/ income) <i>Monitored monthly</i></p>	£0.28m (net)	£167k (net short fall)	R	<p>Previous FSR targets are embedded within existing budget allocations, so this 2013/14 target only includes the budgeted savings from the Sport and Leisure FSR of £0.62m and the £0.34m net cost figure from the UCC FSR business case (0.62m savings less £0.34m cost = £0.28m net).</p> <p>The UCC FSR budget figures are expected to be within the net cost allocation with a probable net improvement.</p> <p>Within Sport and Leisure the revenue budget projection shows a shortfall of income for the year. The FSR target is £0.62m, but we are forecasting a shortfall of income of £369k – however, this is offset by a forecast saving in expenditure of £202k. The net effect is £167k shortfall against £620k target.</p>

Other Performance news - April to September 2013

- Awards and accreditations that were achieved by the Council in first six months of 2013/14:

The highlights are summarised here and are also shown on www.colchester.gov.uk in the [achievements](#) section

Geoplace Exemplar Awards	Runner-up in the Integration award for our waste management integration project using LLPG data. These national awards celebrate excellence in service delivery that was enabled through local government address and street information.
RHS Britain in Bloom	Silver-gilt award for Colchester in Bloom in 'small city' category. Judges said " <i>first time entrant to the national finals, but one to watch in the future.</i> "
Green Flag Awards	Castle Park has received its eleventh consecutive Green Flag, with High Woods receiving its tenth. Green Flags set a benchmark of standards for management and maintenance of publicly accessible urban and countryside parks, and promotes the community value of green spaces.
2013 Housing Design Awards	Hargood Close - a new supported housing development of 35 units for homeless people which opened earlier this year - won the Richard Feilden Award for best social housing scheme of the year. These national awards recognize excellence and sustainability in housing design.
Museum Association	'Outstanding achievement' accolade for the two-year Out in the Open project based at Hollytrees Museum, designed to actively engage with homeless people, community partners and the public.
Essex County Council's Travel Plan Awards.	Colchester Borough Council attained a gold award for the promotion and development of its travel plan. This award includes a £2,000 grant from ECC for additional travel plan measures.
Association of Town and City Management	Purple Flag awarded to Colchester's night time economy – 1 of only 7, in recognition of great hospitality and entertainment areas which offer a positive experience to night-time visitors and users.
LEXCEL	Achieved the Law Society's practice management standard for the fourteenth consecutive year.

- **Performance Framework**

The Council's [Performance Framework](#) brings together all of the various aspects of performance and improvements into one document which is published on its website. The content has been refreshed since April to reflect recent updates or changes such as the planned 2013/14 internal audit programme and the new Scrutiny Panel arrangements.

- **LG Inform**

LG Inform is a data service from the Local Government Association which provides access to a large amount of contextual and performance data relevant to councils and fire and rescue services. It was 'soft launched' to registered users, Chief Executives and

Leaders in September. Access to its [website](#) was restricted to local authorities until November, before then being made open for the public to access.

LG Inform has set up a 'headline report' on its website that compares each council to its peer group, using metrics from various published national datasets. There is the potential to use LG Inform as a tool to create our own headline and custom reports of performance information, from an agreed set of data across our range of services and incorporate other elements such as surveys as appropriate. Our next steps are to learn more about the data service as it develops, carry out an overall scan of available indicators and how current the data is, to consider how we might best use LG Inform.

- **Strategic Plan Action Plan (SPAP)**

Progress made against the SPAP is considered by the Cabinet and by Scrutiny Panel on a six-monthly basis. The report which covered performance for the 2012/13 year and the setting of targets for the 2013/14 year was agreed by the Cabinet in July 2013. This included performance and targets for the Council's corporate indicator set as well as for the SPAP. It is now also shown on the Council's [Strategic Plan 2012-15](#) webpage, for public/audit ease of reference to that information.

The six-monthly update on progress for April to September 2013 is being considered in Appendix 2 of this report.

- **Data Quality**

In line with our Data Quality Strategy, arrangements are made for Internal Audit to review some key indicators within this report each year. The audit's emphasis is on data quality – the processes, methodology, targets, and accuracy of measurement behind the indicator.

These reviews are carried out within the Council's internal audit programme. The 'key corporate indicator – homelessness' audit was completed in July as part of the 2013/14 planned work.

- **Draft Local Audit and Accountability Bill – proposals for a new local public audit framework for local government**

The draft Bill sets out the proposed new audit framework for local public bodies, the process for the appointment of auditors, and the regulatory framework for local public audit. It reached its Second Reading in the House of Commons in October, and is due to be signed into law in the New Year. The [LGA briefing](#) highlights how this Bill may impact local authority publicity and council tax referendums, and whether existing freedom of information rules will be extended to include documentation held by the auditor(s) charged with auditing a local authority.

Colchester Borough Council (CBC) has set out an overarching vision for the borough in The Strategic Plan 2012-2015:

Colchester, the place to live, learn, work and visit

Within this, there are a number of broad aims:

Colchester as a vibrant borough with a bright future wants to be known for:

- Leading for the future
- Creating opportunities for all its residents
- Inspiring and innovating
- Being cleaner and greener
- Listening and responding.

This Strategic Plan 2012-2015 also has a number of priority areas and outcomes to be achieved in two categories as below:

Leading our communities	Delivering high quality, accessible services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regenerating our borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure • Improving opportunities for local business to thrive including retail • Giving local people the chance to improve their skills • Promoting sustainability and reducing congestion • Showing tolerance and changing behaviours to create better local communities • Supporting tourism, heritage and the arts • Bringing investment to the borough • Working in partnerships to help tackle health and crime issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering an efficient benefits service • Reducing, reusing and recycling our waste • Providing more affordable homes across the borough • Improving our streets and local environment • Tackling anti-social behaviour and using enforcement to support priorities • Enabling local communities to help themselves • Supporting more vulnerable groups • Providing sport and leisure for all, alongside good quality green spaces and play areas • Engaging with the voluntary sector.

Each of these has actions and outputs which are included in an annual Action Plan – see following pages for more information about the Action Plan for 2013-2014, and for an update on the progress being made to achieve these outcomes. These actions were agreed at the July 2013 meeting of CBC’s Cabinet.

Delivering high quality, accessible services

The priorities in this section of our action plan are about actual delivery of direct services either through our own Council resources or using others to provide services.

Delivery of an efficient benefits service

Key performance measures and actions include efficient benefit processing services and effective implementation of Universal Customer Contact FSR leading to improved customer journeys and increased online take up:

- **Continue to work to automate benefits processes internally -**

New automation has been completed for processing rent increases from Housing Associations which improves the performance of the benefits assessing team particularly in October and April (for example, around 900 changes for April are now automated).

Additional automation has been achieved through the DWP file transmissions (Atlas) for changes in customer circumstances including maternity, severe disablement, bereavement and for carers. More automation is also under development.

- **Streamline customer journeys -**

The above automation achieves streamlined customer journeys for changes in customer circumstances and rent increases.

Customer journeys for applying for housing benefit, Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) have been reviewed, updated and streamlined.

The new Customer Support Team continues to join up services for customers by offering a 'one solution' service for welfare benefits, housing benefits, housing support and financial support.

- **Increase the uptake on online services for benefits -**

Application for benefits is now at an all-time high of 85% online. A new process for online DHP application has been implemented and more than 300 applications have been made online this financial year.

Students from the University of Essex can now apply for a student discount online without the need to provide a certificate to prove their student status. This is checked automatically using data provided by the University on a daily basis during registration, and then monthly throughout the rest of the year.

Reducing, reusing and recycling our waste

Key actions here include plans for our Shrub End Depot to provide improvement, income, efficiencies and partnership working opportunities for the future along with implementation of recycling educational activities, progress of Section 46 enforcement and the introduction of plastic recycling collections from flats.

- **Food waste for all homes and plastic collections service from flats introduced across the borough** – Food waste collection from more than 62,000 households in the borough commences on 22 October. Over a six-week period food waste collection kits will be distributed to households, with collections taking place the following week after kits are delivered. All households will be able to place food waste out for collection by 29 November on the same day as all other materials are collected.

Throughout the year-long food waste trial, residents asked the Council to explore ways in which caddy liners could be made more accessible and reasonably priced. The Council has been working with local businesses and organisations and has established a Retail Network to stock and sell compostable food waste liners. This will make the compostable food waste liners available to households across the borough at a competitive price in order to make the liners affordable, whilst supporting local businesses.

The introduction of food waste and plastics recycling for residents living in flats is planned for early 2014.

- **Proactive work with local residents to encourage reductions in household waste and increases in recycling** – Zones have completed 66 Recycling Educations at doorsteps at half-year, for people recycling incorrectly. Zones have further undertaken 492 Household Waste Educations which can involve anything to understanding where their boundary is, putting out excessive amounts of black bags to rubbish being left in front gardens and bulky collections.
- **Options appraisals produced on Depot improvement and future of Trade Waste service** - Approval has been given to replace the baling shed and baler at Shrub End Depot. To maximise the opportunities from this investment, discussions are taking place with Essex County Council (ECC) who are looking at the development of the Recycling Centre for Household Waste (RCHW) co-located on the site. The development of the depot and RCHW both handle similar materials and therefore it would be prudent to look to see whether any savings or income opportunities could arise from working together or optimising the combined site layouts.
- **Trade waste** – An options appraisal for the service will take place in conjunction with Commercial Services and the East of England Local Government Association.

Strategic Plan - Action Plan for 2013-2014 – update on progress against agreed actions April to September 2013

Providing more affordable homes across the borough

Key actions here include the use of our own land and assets to facilitate the building of new affordable housing. We also aim to ensure the Housing Trajectory demonstrates a 15-year supply of housing sites, including a 5-year supply of deliverable sites and we will undertake a range of measures to bring empty homes back into use.

- **400 new affordable homes to be built over three years** – 133 delivered in 2012/13 (total new homes ‘all tenures’ was 617); 2013/14 - 25 affordable homes delivered by end September which brings the total so far against the three-year target to 158 affordable homes. This is in line with expected delivery for this year which is predicted to deliver the greatest number of units in quarters 3 and 4.
- **Qualifying sites¹ achieve the percentage of affordable housing, as stated in Planning Policy unless a viability study for each site indicates another level is acceptable.** - At the half-year stage, five qualifying sites had legal agreements settled which specified the affordable housing contribution due on that site. The affordable housing contribution by site is set out below:

Total number of homes on the site	Number of homes due if 35% affordable policy applied	Number of affordable homes actually secured	Committed sum to provide affordable homes off-site in lieu of on-site
126	44	16 (13%)	£666,343
43	15	43 (100%)	0
128	45	25 (20%)	0
123	43	31 (25%)	0
32	11	0 (0%)	£294,262

- **Implementation and monitoring of progress of the Empty Homes action plan from April 2013 –**

- During the New Town Day of Action the addresses of 50 empty homes were supplied to the Zone Team. They checked these and 10 homes were occupied. Others had ‘For Sale’ boards/had been sold. 40% of the empty homes had been or were being returned to use.
- The [‘report an empty home’](#) button on the CBC website has been used four times. All of these properties were known to CBC.
- The 10% discount on council tax for second homes was removed, and the full council tax charge is now due on second homes.
- Homes which have been empty and unfurnished for two years or more now have to pay 150% of the council tax charge.
- “Empty Homes Rescue” leaflet produced publicising the availability of grants of up to £20,000 to bring empty homes back into use through the Colne Housing/HCA funded scheme. Leaflet added to CBC web-page and mailed to 200 owners of empty homes which have been empty for two years or more. Three owners of empty homes contacted the Council and work is progressing with them.
- A total of 20 empty homes were bought back into use as a result of intervention by the Council.
- **To update the housing trajectory and ensure an adequate supply of housing land –**
Annual update of housing trajectory has commenced, and will be completed by December 2013.

¹ Qualifying sites means sites of 10 units or more in Colchester, Stanway, Tiptree, Mersea and Wivenhoe or 3 units elsewhere.

Improving our streets and local environment

Improved street cleanliness and shifting resources to increase responsiveness to environmental and cleanliness issues is a key action here along with Enabling Community Ownership to facilitate communities taking an active role in keeping their local environment clean, tidy and loved. Developing and maintaining strategic partnerships (Essex County Council, [ECC], Bus and Rail operators) to help deliver improvements in air quality and sustainable transport infrastructure is an important action to improve our local environment.

Cleanliness and air quality actions:

- **In partnership with the Local Highways department (ECC), we will produce an interim Air Quality Action Plan. This plan will set out what the borough and the county intend to do to improve air quality within our Air Management Areas –** An interim Air Quality Action Plan has been submitted to DEFRA together with this year's Local Air Quality Management Progress report. Please note that this report cannot be made publicly available until it has been appraised and approved by DEFRA.
- **Continue with our behavioural change project – 'loveurcar' –** The project has held campaigns to encourage both walking as a mode of transport for shorter distances and car sharing, and discourages leaving car engines idling. In addition, 'loveurcar' branded car parking spaces are to be provided in Council car parks.
- **Commence work to produce a Low Emission Strategy for the borough. This piece of work will include a Low Emission Zone Feasibility Study (project to be completed 2014- 15) –** Air Quality specialists have been appointed to carry out a baseline emission study of the whole borough. This study will include all major road sources and industrial sources and will give an indication of pollution hotspots (including Air Quality Management Areas) for Nitrogen Dioxide and particulate matter of diameter less than or equal to 10 microns and 2.5 microns (PM10 and PM2.5). The findings of this baseline study will inform the development of a Low Emission Strategy to address the hotspots identified.

Improving our streets and local environment - continued

Enabling community ownership and active participation actions:

- **Deliver 3 Community Days of Action in various neighbourhoods** – Two Community Days of Action (CDoA) have been delivered so far for 2013-2014. One in St Andrew's Ward in April and more recently in New Town. In St Andrew's, the top three issues identified were litter/street cleanliness, dogs/dog fouling and anti-social behaviour (ASB); 14 agencies worked alongside local residents to increase community reassurance around crime and fear of crime. Amongst some of the highlights, 470 residents attended the 'Give and Take' event in the Community Centre, six new bollards installed in a car park in Stanley Wooster Way, a new bench installed in Magnolia Field and planters installed in Hawthorn Avenue as part of 'Glorious Greenstead' campaign. The new Police and Crime Commissioner also attended the event. In New Town, the top three issues identified were parking, dogs/dog fouling and litter/street cleanliness. 25 agencies worked alongside local residents and 10.5 tonnes of litter were removed, 67 vehicles stopped and 44 tickets issued, three arrests made and a variety of community engagement and enforcement activities took place throughout the day.
- **Engage with schools to raise awareness around environmental issues and increase the number of schools participating in litter picks and Junior Warden schemes** – A new Junior Warden Scheme is being set up at Tiptree Heath Primary School and is due to start from October onwards. We now have three Junior Warden Schemes running, the other two being in St Anne's and St Andrew's. The Junior Warden project has two main aims:
 - 1) To engage with young people at an age where we can influence their decisions and behaviours in the community
 - 2) Give them a greater understanding of their environment and to help encourage a sense of pride and responsibility.This is a long-term behaviour change programme, and it is when the young people start in secondary school that we will see if there is embedded change. We have 12 schools engaged in regular litter picking as well as other activities such as Eco Bugs, and we also help with walking buses which gives us the opportunity to talk with the children.
- **Introduce a pilot in the Town Centre to enforce reductions in littering during the evening / night time economy hours** -. Two pilot exercises have taken place so far, on the Purple Flag Assessment evening and on the Night of Action. The results of this work will be reviewed in line with costs and outputs and possible options for the future will be considered.

Tackling anti-social behaviour and using enforcement to support priorities

Our key actions for this priority include the achievement of Purple Flag accreditation, thereby recognising excellence in the management of town centres in the evening and at night and to raise standards and improve the experience of Colchester town centre after dark. We also want to focus and continue working with partners to deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB) in its widest sense, including issues relating to noise, graffiti, litter and dog fouling as well as more traditional anti-social behaviour, with the emphasis on behaviour change rather than just enforcement. We aim to work with local communities to reduce anti-social behaviour and promote pride.

- **Develop and implement a Night Time Improvement Plan and retain Purple Flag Accreditation** – A draft Purple Flag Action Plan has been developed and will be presented to the reformed Purple Flag Working Group in November.
- **Deliver a Night of Action in the town centre** – This is being planned in Castle Ward/Town Centre for early December.
- **Initiate the Street Drinkers outreach project in partnership with the April Centre.** This project is now being delivered in partnership with Open Road who will be employing an outreach worker from November 2013 to work in with the police and the Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) ASB team. The project will focus on a small number of street drinkers in an intensive way with support and/or enforcement.
- **Continue Zone activities to reduce anti-social behaviour** – Zone wardens have intervened in a number of ASB incidents. These range from neighbour disputes to dog issues, cluttering communal housing areas, to noise. We continue to work proactively using each ASB incident as an opportunity to influence behaviour change. One of the biggest impacts we have had so far is working with CBH, Estuary and Colne Housing Associations. Following weekly empty properties' updates we visit them regularly during their unoccupied period, thereby reducing squatting instances, discouraging groups of drinkers and drug users. This leads to an improved environment around the properties which often became misused and targeted. Vandalism, cleanliness and noise issues have all been reduced significantly. We intervene, often with partner support, at the first instance of ASB being raised. We also target resources where necessary, such as a single street that generates significant ASB issues for its Housing Association. We make sure we visit regularly, are highly visible and act quickly. This again has had results as we slowly change people's behaviours.
- **Introduce a pilot in the Town Centre to enforce reductions in littering during the evening / night time economy hours** – XFor Pilot has been used twice and is currently in review to assess impact and decide on future approach.
- **Partnership working to enable Zones to utilise enforcement powers to tackle flyposting** - A new process has been implemented with Planning since 1 July, to allow our Wardens to advise Planning of all associated information / evidence of flyposting. The offender is given two days to remove the notice, if not the Planning Team take on the responsibility for prosecutions. 79 enforcement actions have taken place so far using this process, with the businesses being made aware of their responsibility to remove the posters. There have been no prosecutions so far as the remainder have no business details available. However, we will look at developing the process to see if resource can be allocated within Planning to research the origin of the business.

Enabling local communities to help themselves

Our key actions for this priority are to enable communities to improve or develop new facilities such as community centres, sport and recreational facilities and for Zone Teams to identify and engage with formal and informal community groups within the borough.

- **Continued use of S106 Funding for community developments** – A variety of community facility, open space, sport and recreational facilities and improvements are being delivered through funding from S106 agreements. Projects include working with Town and Parish Councils to deliver improvements in local halls, in response to increasing demands generated by increases in resident population. A total of £407,000 has been allocated to community projects so far during 2013-14. These range from Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance building works in New Town to the creation of new community space in Stanway.
- **Development of a borough-wide sports facility strategy in conjunction with Sport England in order to plan for new sport and leisure facilities and activities in North Colchester and elsewhere in the borough and to get greater benefit from existing facilities** – CBC Officers have developed a draft contract and the evaluation criteria is being drawn up to send, along with the agreed brief, to the consultants on the Sport England Framework.
- **Community Services to work collectively to develop, support and enable community led activities and clubs and to encourage a supportive local environment for community activities** - Zone Wardens have enabled 732 community events in this period. This can range between events that encourage a sense of community and social engagement through to behaviour change. As an example the teams support neighbourhood coffee mornings or activity sessions for elderly people. These are aimed at keeping fit, as well as socialising and getting out of the house. These can sometimes be the only interactions available to many older people who live alone. We also support and work with members of the community to enable clubs for a range of age groups and interests. Two examples in St Anne's include a dance club and an allotment club. We are currently working with three youth groups to develop youth clubs in St Anne's, Tiptree and Mersea where the intention is to support the implementation, but then hand over the ongoing running of the clubs to the local community.

Supporting more vulnerable groups

The main actions identified to help support vulnerable groups include working with partners in the voluntary sector and sub-region to provide new specialist support services to prevent households becoming homeless, and to support and develop skills within vulnerable groups in respect of confidence and assertion to support independent living and safety. Another key action is to support and contribute to the Essex Families Pilot aimed at working with partners to support vulnerable families.

- **DCLG Street Homeless Project with April Centre to be continued and monitored** - The April Centre has commenced the two-year rough sleepers' outreach project. An action plan has been submitted which includes the recruitment of a Homeless Co-ordinator and two part-time workers by November 2013. The aim of the street outreach service is to engage with any rough sleepers to ensure they do not spend a second night out but in particular to work with entrenched rough sleepers, of whom there are known to be 16 within the area of Colchester and Tending.
- **Deliver 'Crucial Crew' programme to Year 6 pupils across the borough and a further 'Crucial Crew' for older people -In 2013**
Crucial Crew for young people delivered personal safety education to more than 1,500 Year 6 children from 53 schools across the borough. The safety scenarios included road, crime, anti-social behaviour, fire, internet, rail, drugs and alcohol. Plans for the 2014 event are underway with provisional dates of 2–13 June. The first 'Crucial Crew' for Older People took place in April 2013. It was opened by the Police and Crime Commissioner and included information on potential dangers related to crime, fire, trading standards and environmental health. It was attended by more than 110 older people and included a range of partners from the public and private sector. The feedback was very positive.
- **Launch a new 'Keep Safe' project in the town centre** – This new project was successfully launched in the town centre on 6 June, with plans to extend borough-wide. The scheme currently has signed up 22 venues including: Poundland, 99p Stores, HMV, the Police station, the Duchess, Riley's (Snooker Hall), One Housing Group, SOS Bus/Open Road, all Essex County Libraries throughout Colchester borough, CBC Fleet Vehicles, Best Level Café, Colchester Town Hall and our Customer Service Centre, with a further eight venues currently being approached. 102 members are currently signed up to the scheme.
- **Update CBC's Safeguarding training records and complete audits in line with Essex Safeguarding Children and Adults Board' requirements** – Safeguarding training records continue to be updated in line with the requirements of the Safeguarding Boards and statutory obligations. A new joint ESCB and ESAB Section 11 web-based audit is due on 25 October and work is being prepared for this. Updated figures on training, as well as various information in relation to a range of new 'standards', will be included in the Council's response.
- **Award of agreed Welfare Grant Programme funding to key Voluntary Sector Partners supporting the delivery of CBC's priorities** - £231,132 voluntary welfare funding has been awarded for 2013-2014 to support voluntary and community groups that assist the Council in meeting its strategic priorities - especially with regard to supporting vulnerable groups, engaging with the voluntary sector and enabling local communities to help themselves.

Providing sport and leisure for all, alongside good quality green spaces and play areas

Our key actions here are to develop a sport and leisure service that embraces new technology and responds to customers' needs in order to improve access to services so that sports participation is increased. We also want to enable communities and work with partners to deliver better open spaces and leisure and work with local sports clubs, leisure providers and other partners to deliver projects that build on the energy and excitement resulting from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympics.

- **Continue and increase participation in the Park Run event in Colchester as part of the national initiative** – The Inaugural Saturday Castle Parkrun was on 6 April and continues every Saturday, organised and managed by Core volunteer groups. Participation recorded for April to September - 22 events; 2,943 participants; 944 individuals; biggest attendance =158; average of 134 per run; average of 15 volunteers per week. CBC contributed £1,500 to start-up costs = 51p per participant to date.
- **Continue to work with Colchester School of Gymnastics to realise their extended facility following the upsurge of interest brought on by the London Olympics. This includes using CBC's S106 funding** – CBC has allocated £174,000 from Royal London S106 fund. CBC officers worked with CSOG directing them to other potential sources of funding and National Governing Bodies. CSOG has now received new 'value engineered' basic plans and support from an experienced local construction company providing advice and guidance. The next phase is to confirm the total fund available and cost of the project.
- **Chair the Active Colchester Network and ensure the agreed action plan is delivered** – CBC Officers chair the Active Colchester group and attend Essex Active Networks Chairs group. An Action Plan for 2013/14 was agreed and based on funding via Active Essex. £12,300 of this funding secured for projects such as the Tour Series community event (£3,800), Parkrun (£1,000), Urban Games (£2,000), leader-led cycle rides (£2,000) and free activities for older people (£500). An application for 'sportivate' funding for five sports project to be delivered by CUCST on behalf of Active Colchester was abandoned when CUCST ceased trading.
- **Increase participation and income in line with FSR objectives by improving the capacity for customers to book sport and leisure activities online, capacity for customers to self-serve at Leisure World Colchester and introducing 'MyLeisureWorld' card** - My Leisure Card was launched on 24 April in line with the 'go-live' date of the new Welcome Zone at Leisure World Colchester. At 31 August, 66.65% of adult customers are now Leisure Card holders. Self-service kiosks were introduced on 24 April - between May and August 51,093 tickets were transacted by 2,977 individual adult Leisure Card holders. Web bookings were launched on 1 May - between May and August 6,854 web bookings were made online by 750 individual adult Leisure Card holders. At 31 August 32.44% of Leisure Card holders are using either web bookings or kiosks to self-serve. Staff training on the Loyalty part of the Leisure Management system took place in September, and work is being carried out to launch loyalty rewards for Leisure Card holders from January 2014.
- **Gym in Castle Park and agreed use of Open Space S106 funding** – A variety of open space sport and recreational facilities and improvements being delivered through funding from S106 agreements. Tenders for the Olympic Legacy Project including the outdoor gym and toddlers sand play have been received and been the subject of public consultation to identify preferences. Work on site to commence late autumn 2013.

Engaging with the voluntary sector

Our key aims are to look for opportunities to transfer the management of assets and services to the voluntary sector where this can achieve improved services and efficiencies, and to work with the voluntary sector to address strategic issues, support communities and groups and further strengthen partnerships.

- **Award of agreed Welfare Grant Programme funding to key Voluntary Sector Partners supporting the delivery of CBC's priorities** - Approval and distribution of the £231,132 voluntary welfare grant funding has been completed. Full details of the awards recipients and activities and benefits that are expected in return for these grants were included in the portfolio holder report at the start of the year.
- **Transfer the management of assets and services to the voluntary sector where this can achieve improved services and efficiencies** – Unfortunately due to a fire at the Garrison Gym the transfer of this building to the community has been delayed. However, we have recently heard from the loss adjusters that the Council may be able to renovate the building to a shell and then renew negotiations with the Abbeygate Church to complete the transformation to a community centre.

Leading our communities

This section of the action plan is about influencing others in a range of functions where the Council does not have direct responsibility for delivery, but knows that these things are vital to the future of the borough and its residents.

Regenerating our borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure

This is arguably one of the most challenging but important priorities for the Council in the current climate. The main actions here are to support the delivery of the key regeneration sites, and bring back existing buildings into use including stalled sites to deliver new homes and jobs. We also aim to bring forward the regeneration of key areas in the borough to provide enhanced community facilities and infrastructure, including public spaces, by working in partnership with the public and private sectors.

- **Continue to support the delivery of Greyfriars Hotel and East Hill House conversion** – Greyfriars Hotel on site and due for completion and opening in February 2014. The East Hill House developer is engaged in conversations with Planning to bring forward development.
- **Development of the first Phase of the Severalls site** – Development underway on site and units selling to end users.
- **Progress the delivery of a Masterplan for the Cuckoo Farm South / Northern Gateway to deliver new leisure facilities and jobs including development of a hotel, health and fitness centre and associated retail** – draft Masterplan due December 2013, 2 sites in Phase 1 completed leading to 100 jobs created or retained in the borough.
- **Consider approval of a planning application for North Growth Area Urban Extension** – application considered by Planning Committee in September. Recommendation to approve, agreed by members, now referred to Secretary of State.
- **Progress the completion of Transcoast project delivering new pontoons and community benefits**- Pontoons in place and completed, Town to Port trail community event completed with more than 5,000 attendees.
- **Progress the creation of a new public park within the Maltings Development** – Public park secured through S106 and development on site.
- **Progress the creation of a Masterplan for the Coldoc / Fieldgates sites** – Work on hold pending completion of River walls structural survey, jointly funded through Transcoast EU monies and HCA.
- **Progress planning consent for Phase 2 of the St Botolph's Quarter, providing new homes and retail opportunities** – Expressions of interest from developers due by 23 October following marketing exercise.
- **Progress Town Station (Oyster) Square and Berryfield extension to transfer the outside play area back to St Thomas More school as per the legal agreement** - Both schemes on site in October and due for completion in December 2013.

Improving opportunities for local business to thrive including retail

Key actions for this priority include the implementation of key projects within the Better Town Centre Programme Plan, including delivery of the new Creative Business Centre providing flexible work space and network and business support facilities for a priority growth sector. Also to deliver the Colchester Digital Strategy and develop local networks and business support to enable Colchester businesses to start up and to grow.

- **Continue activities to securing a minimum of 6,000ft² of flexible workspace** – European Regional Development Fund bid submitted 25 October for part funding for the proposed Creative Incubator in Queen Street. Remaining project funding already secured.
- **Progress planning consent for Vineyard Gate Shopping centre** – Work is ongoing regarding viability of the Vineyard Gate scheme. Until this has been resolved conversations regarding planning consent are on hold.
- **Continue to seek external funding up to £300,000 to progress aspiration of a ‘Lanes-style’ retail offering** – External funding for ‘The Walls’ being sought in addition to business engagement activities.
- **Progress delivery of superfast broadband and 4G mobile connectivity by the end of 2014**
 - Roll-out of 4G-enabled Town Centre WiFi is scheduled for December, providing half an hour’s free internet and phone connectivity per day per user and 24/7 access to three websites – colchester.gov.uk, Visit Colchester and gov.uk - to support channel-shift.
 - Build-out of fixed wireless broadband across underserved areas of the borough continues and the Council is conceding a lease to support this in Q4 2013.
 - Active discussions continue with the Council’s fibre partner for open access fibre roll-out to key areas of the borough.
- **Increase the number of partnership links relating to business, employment and skills initiatives**

The Colchester Enterprise Hub commenced its first entrepreneurship programme on 17 October. The pilot programme will enable 16 local residents to transform their business plan into a trading company supported by local business investment and mentoring. The latter will be delivered by the Colchester business mentors, of whom 36 have been recruited so far from local businesses. The Hub has received significant tangible support from the business community, and is actively building partnerships with the University of Essex and Colchester Institute.
- **Work with ‘Colchester Works’ to increase the promotion and take up of employment and skills initiatives to local residents and businesses**

‘Colchester Works’ is an initiative facilitated by the Council which has increased its membership to more than 40 partners. The emphasis is currently on supporting partnering between providers and creating an effective ladder of opportunity for jobseekers. A particular success in the current year has been working with a major new care home provider to ensure that the 70 jobs plus apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities associated with the facility have targeted local residents.

Giving local people the chance to improve their skills

Our key actions here are to work with the Adult Community College and Job Centre Plus to increase the number of residents with skills for work by providing extra courses in community venues. We also want to help reduce the number of young people aged 18 to 24 in the borough who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and increase the take-up of Apprenticeships in the borough.

- **Work with Colchester NEET Group (including ECC) to deliver work/training initiatives that will benefit the Colchester NEET group and help to reduce the cohort numbers** – A weekly work club is held at the offices of a youth apprenticeship organisation based in Crouch Street for people under 25. Engagement with this age range has been challenging; however, the numbers are now starting to build and recently 2 members have been offered interviews and 1 has secured an apprenticeship. The Council is represented in the Raising Participation Age/NEET group for Colchester and Tendring and supports the group's initiatives such as its annual Careers Convention attended by 1,600 Year 11 pupils. ECC's FreeFormers initiative provides access by the NEET Group to Information Technology jobs.
- **Work with Job Centre Plus and other partners to maintain work clubs and continue our customer support team initiative** - Six Work Clubs continue to run, with an average of four residents at each session. These clubs are now being facilitated by a team of experienced volunteers, who receive ongoing support from the CBC 'back to work' team. Since the start of the year, eight residents attending the clubs have found employment.
- **Work with the Adult Community College to increase the number of residents with skills for work by providing extra courses at community venues** – An employability course including job searches, CV writing and interview skills took place in the Army Welfare Centre in September. In addition, six lone parents attended a training and employability information session (this group are now required to look for work) in July. This included advice on benefits, courses and family learning, volunteering and work clubs. One attendee has become a volunteer with the Credit Union and all other participants have a written Careers Action Plan.
- **Deliver Job and Volunteers' Fairs** - This Fair took place in September in the Moot Hall with a record 13 employers participating including Sainsbury's, Barclays, Halifax and Essex County Council. In addition, 20 organisations offering training, apprenticeships, careers advice and volunteering opportunities also attended and 350 residents visited on the day.

Promoting sustainability and reducing congestion

Our key actions for this priority are to support the reduction of unnecessary traffic in the town centre. We also aim to use the public realm strategy to develop a package of measures to enhance the vitality and economic prosperity of the area. We want to develop, with ECC, the sustainable transport infrastructure for the North Colchester Connectivity corridor and deliver Travel Change Behaviour programmes with transport providers to help address congestion and air quality. We also aim to review Nottingham Declaration strategy and develop a new Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

- **To review proposal to reduce traffic in the High Street in the light of ECC's unilateral decision on 11 April to suspend the experimental orders without consultation with CBC** - ECC decided to reintroduce on 13 October only part of the original scheme – the bus lane up North Hill and the bus lane into Queen Street from High Street. Cameras have been installed to enforce the bus lanes. Access to High Street is still possible via Head Street. Phase 2 changes to be developed by ECC and delivered with Park and Ride.
- **Secure funding to move forward streetscape and public realm enhancements in the town centre** – CURE funding being used to deliver activities in St Botolph's public square such as Black History Month. Activities programme being developed for High Street.
- **Sustainable Transport -**
 - **Commence construction of 1,000-space Park and Ride facility at North Colchester**
 - **Approve a solution for bus priority in the North Station Area through to the town centre**
 - **Prepare for the delivery of the Northern Approach Road (NAR) 2 Rapid Transit Corridor**Work has started on construction of the NAR3 providing the link from the existing NAR to the A12 Junction 28. Working with ECC to enhance a submission to the Department for Transport for pinch point funding to allow construction of Park and Ride to start in 2014. Project is a priority for the South East Local Transport Board. Comments sent to ECC on potential options for the bus priority in the station area.
- **CBC to support the Colchester Travel Plan club (CTPC) to promote Travel Change Behaviour**
 - **Continue to work with existing partners, seek new partners**
 - **Promoting walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing to help address congestion, air quality and address personal health**

The DEFRA-funded air quality initiative, 'loveurcar' campaign has been rolled out including a programme of bill boards, a flash mob and social media updates. Flash mob video promoting walking for short trips has had more than 2,000 hits. The campaign is promoted through the existing Travel Plan Club members. Initial discussions have taken place with four businesses regarding membership of the travel plan club.

Strategic Plan - Action Plan for 2013-2014 – update on progress against agreed actions April to September 2013

Cycling has been promoted using bespoke projects for individual members and through campaigns such as the Bike Fashion Show in partnership with Culver Square, the launch of the Cycling Centurion Treasure Trail, and Cycle Colchester stalls at events throughout the summer. We have worked with the existing CTPC members to deliver their travel plan commitments and retain their Travel Plan accreditation.

- **Behaviour Change and Transport strategies –**
 - **Finalise the Stanway Travel Strategy with ECC and prepare and overarching Transportation Summary Document as evidence base to inform the review of the Local Plan –**
Comments on a draft version of the Stanway Travel Strategy have been supplied to ECC, and we are awaiting the final draft document from ECC.
Transportation Review to be presented to November Policy Review and Development Panel.
- **Further enhance the Cycle Delivery SPD to ensure funding is allocated through future developer contributions mechanisms – CIL and S106 -**
Work is being undertaken to cost out the measures in the strategy, but using the Cycle Delivery Supplementary Planning Document, cycle improvements have been secured as part of the following developments:-
 - Betts site – Ipswich Road
 - Stanway Railway sidings - Halstead Road
 - North Growth Area Urban Extension.

The Local Highway Panel has allocated funding for the design of :

- Comprehensive signage of all routes and realign suitable routes for main urban area
 - Butt Road to Norman Way – improving access to schools, signs and lining
 - Hospital Lane to Sheepen Road via Colchester Institute – improving access to schools, signs and lining.
- **Host a round of the Pearl Izumi Tour Series 2013 with supporting community event –**
Successfully hosted the Tour Series professional cycle racing on 30 May with more than 8,000 people attending.

- **Work with Greater Anglia and ECC on the Station Travel Plan and the Community Rail Partnership to promote sustainable travel to stations -.**

Greater Anglia has invested and launched 'Bike and Go' cycle hire at the station. Using the Colchester Travel Plan Club to promote the hire scheme. Greater Anglia has prioritised Colchester for further investment and is working with partners on a new initiative 'Fixing the Link' to improve the link from the station to the town centre. A review of the draft North Station Masterplan has commenced.

Showing tolerance and changing behaviours to create better local communities

Our key action for this priority is to work with partners to successfully introduce a new integrated offender management programme to reduce repeat crime. We also want to develop and agree a service level agreement with the Probation Service to enable positive use of the Community Payback scheme. We have an overarching aim to promote tolerance and work with partners and communities to meet the diverse needs across the borough, and consider equality and diversity implications in our policies on those with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender, race, religion, belief, pregnancy, maternity, marriage, civil partnership, sexual orientation, gender reassignment).

- **Work with Probation Service to enable Community Payback scheme to continue** – The partnership with the Probation Service continues to be a valuable and growing one. Individual placements work very well for both the Council and the individual. Group work has increased this year, with Probation being able to respond to one-off events as well.
- **Continue (with partners) the offender management programme** - The Integrated Offender Management report from April to July showed that Colchester and Tendring having the lowest re-offending rates in the county and performs well nationally. The team has continued to focus on ensuring they are engaging the right offenders. They have had a number of success stories including the recall of a known burglar in Colchester within hours of intelligence coming to light, and setting up a previously prolific shoplifter with the tools to start his own business. They have had a number of offenders make it through a year without re-offending, and the relationship within the IOM team is strong. They have used funding to purchase items like work boots and CSCS cards to enable individuals to get back into stable employment and stay away from offending behaviour.
- **Consider Equality and Diversity and promote tolerance and the diverse needs of our residents, reporting annually to the Policy and Review Development Panel on progress** – The Council continues to have a robust and embedded approach to equality and diversity with Equality Impact Assessments being undertaken on all policies, a dedicated resource in place, support and participation in groups and a number of activities and improvements being undertaken in services. The annual review of the Council's approach and evidence of its activities and achievements in this area will be scrutinised and reported to Policy Review and Development Panel in November.
- **Continue to operate Zone working principles with a focus on local needs** - The main principle of being able to respond to the needs of a smaller community is now embedded and works well. The model has provided a more efficient and responsive way of working, however managing demand and expectations is challenging and budget cuts in some of the traditionally County-led functions have increased workloads. A formal review of the approach will take place over 2013-14 now that the new Community Services is in place, and has seen Parks and Recreation move into the Zones management structure for the first time.

Supporting tourism, heritage and the arts

Our key actions are to work with partners and local industry businesses to increase the economic impact of tourism in the borough. We also want to work in partnership with Colchester Arts Centre, Firstsite, the Mercury Theatre and the Museum Service to provide leadership and support to deliver the Creative Colchester strategy and increase skills, jobs, community development and forge new links between cultural, creative, tourism and hospitality sectors. We have our exciting Castle re-development project and the associated interpretation of the wider heritage in the borough and our aim to deliver increased visitor numbers, and encouraging day visitors to overnight/weekend stay visitors.

- **To increase trips to the borough and spending while here** – 2012 data will be available in December.
- **To increase the number of people employed in tourism from 3,910 to 4,100 ('full-time equivalent' by 31 March 2014) - 2012** data will be available in December.
- **Creative Colchester strategy / Deliver identified priorities within the Action Plan** – Creative Colchester refresh and revised action plan being drafted for approval by Investors Board in February 2014.
- **Develop and maintain delivery mechanisms for improvement and maintenance of our heritage assets across the borough** Heritage panels at Duncan's Gate and Balkeine Gate, produced in partnership with the Friends of Colchester's Roman Wall, were unveiled on 12 June and 2 September respectively. Interpretation of Colchester's wider heritage will be augmented by the creation of an App trail next year. In addition small exhibitions were installed in Hollytrees Museum in early June and in the Garden Room at the Minorities on 28 August. They feature the work of the volunteer team in conserving objects for the new displays in the Castle. Hollytrees was used as the venue for public information sessions about the Castle redevelopment project as part of Heritage Open Days on 14/15 September. The new HLF Unlocked project will showcase a new way of experiencing the museum collections of Colchester and Ipswich Borough Councils and this is well into development.
- **Deliver the Castle redevelopment project** – The Castle redevelopment project is progressing well and is still on target to open in the late Spring 2014. Hutton Construction, who are carrying out the main building works at Colchester Castle, have insulated the roof and are now installing the under-floor heating. Beck Interiors were appointed as the main fit-out contractors and Spiral Productions were awarded the AV and multimedia contract at the end of May. The use of light projection onto the internal spine wall of the Castle has been investigated and proved to be technically possible. The light projection will consist of short films highlighting the dramatic events in the Castle's history and will be shown at intervals during the day. When the films are not playing the wall will be fully visible. The use of such large-scale light projection as a regular interpretive element in this way will be innovative.

Bringing investment to the borough

Our key actions are to work with Invest Essex to promote the Colchester offer and attract inward investment into the borough. Work with the Integrated County Strategy and Haven Gateway Partnerships to secure the infrastructure investment identified in Colchester's Local Investment Plan and target 20 companies in key growth sectors to secure additional investment in the borough in excess of £1m. We aim to secure funding from Growing Places Fund, Integrated County Strategy investment fund, Europe, private sector partners and other sources for key projects.

- **Secure new inward investment into the borough in excess of £2m** - Target exceeded combining new inward investment from Marel (suppliers of meat processing equipment), Proinor (Freight Forwarders) and Arqiva (Telecommunications infrastructure).
- **Secure funding from Growing Places Fund, Integrated County Strategy investment fund, EU funding programmes, private sector partners and other sources for key projects** – Work ongoing to ensure Colchester offer and “ask” is highlighted within refreshed Essex Growth Strategy, South East Local Enterprise Partnership Plan and new European Union Prospectus. Visibility in these documents for Colchester key projects will lead to opportunities for future funding bids.

Working in partnerships to help tackle health and crime issues

Our key actions include working with our partners on the Safer Colchester Partnership to agree a plan to reduce crime and support the Neighbourhood Action Panels we also aim to develop our partnership with Essex Probation Service. We want to work with Public Health at ECC to coordinate and integrate our public health work with the wider agenda and the Public Health Outcomes framework, and to develop partnerships with other local health organisations, including North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

- **CBC will continue to review its approach to supporting the Health Agenda given the new Local Authority responsibilities. We will develop agreed partnership priorities and targets, where applicable, and seek funding opportunities to support a more preventative health agenda** – The new Public Health Responsibility deal has been endorsed by the Portfolio Holder for Communities. This initiative is about organisations making commitments to promote/facilitate healthy lifestyles and staff wellbeing. It's an opportunity for the Local Authority to develop its role in promoting healthy lifestyles and choices for example through its statutory duties for food safety and alcohol licensing and through its contacts with other businesses.
- **Work with our partners on the Safer Colchester Partnership to agree a partnership plan to reduce crime** - This plan has been written, agreed and is currently being monitored. It has four priorities: reducing domestic violence, reducing re-offending, reducing harm caused through alcohol, and reducing crime and the fear of crime.
- **Encourage representation on the Safer Colchester Partnership from the new Clinical Commissioning Group** – the Chair of the Safer Colchester Partnership has spoken with the representative from the Clinical Commissioning Group and she has agreed to attend the partnership meetings.
- **Support the work of the Neighbourhood Action Panels** – The Safer Colchester Partnership agreed to reduce the Neighbourhood Action Panels (NAPs) from 12 to 7 in line with CBC Zones. This decision was taken in order to maintain Police and CBC commitment to the NAPs at a time of reduced resources. Most NAPs have now successfully merged and have met at least twice since the merge. Zone 3 NAP is experiencing some difficulties around the size of the new NAP, however this is being monitored and solutions sought.
- **Seek ongoing support for the SOS Bus from both the Safer Colchester Partnership and the North East Essex CCG to ensure the service is maintained and clinical cover provides access to treatment** – Both the Safer Colchester Partnership and Essex County have funded the SOS Bus for 2013-14. However, the funding for 2014-15 is not secure and the partnership continues to work with Open Road in order to secure ongoing revenue funding.

