

Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Grand Jury Room, Town Hall
12 March 2013 at 6.00pm

The Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel look at policies and strategies from a borough-wide perspective and ensure the actions of the Cabinet accord with the policies and budget of the Council. The Panel reviews corporate strategies within the Council's Strategic Plan, overviews Council partnerships, considers the Council's budgetary guidelines for the forthcoming year, and scrutinises Cabinet decisions or Cabinet Member decisions (with delegated power) which have been called in.

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

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Have Your Say!

The Council values contributions from members of the public. Under the Council's Have Your Say! policy you can ask questions or express a view to meetings, with the exception of Standards Committee meetings. If you wish to speak at a meeting or wish to find out more, please refer to Attending Meetings and "Have Your Say" at www.colchester.gov.uk

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Terms of Reference (but not limited to)

To review corporate strategies and strategic partnerships to ensure the actions of the Cabinet and Portfolio Holders accord with the policies and budget of the Council.

To monitor and scrutinise the financial performance of the Council, and make recommendations to the Cabinet particularly in relation to annual revenue and capital guidelines, bids and submissions.

To link the Council's spending proposals to the policy priorities and review progress towards achieving those priorities against the Strategic / Action Plans.

To scrutinise executive decisions made by Cabinet or a Cabinet Member, the Colchester and Ipswich Joint Museums Committee and the North Essex Parking Partnership (decisions relating to off-street parking only) which have been made but not implemented, and referred to the Panel through call-in.

To monitor the Council's operational performance in relation to the Strategic Plan and Performance Indicators, and the Cabinet's performance in relation to the Forward Plan.

The panel will be the appropriate route for any member to refer a 'local government matter' in the context of Councillor Call for Action.

Process for Councillor Call for Action

Councillors have the ability to call for debate and discussion a topic of neighbourhood concern, limited to issues affecting a single ward, in an attempt to bring about specific solutions for local problems, without going through the Council's executive decision making process.

Members may not call for debate matters relating to a planning or licensing decision, an individual complaint or where a right of recourse to a review or right of appeal is already provided for in law. Examples of where a member can bring an action to the panel's attention are poor service performance or increased anti-social behaviour.

The panel may reject a request as not within the guidance or where they consider the usual channels have not been exhausted, or accept that an investigation is the appropriate action.

The panel may conduct an investigation in the usual scrutiny manner and a report with recommendations will be compiled and brought to the Council or partners attention, with the Council or partners having a duty to respond. The panel will consider and publish the responses to their recommendations and feed back this information to the Councillor requesting the action.

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
12 March 2013 at 6:00pm

Members

Chairman : Councillor Kevin Bentley.
Deputy Chairman : Councillor Beverly Davies.
Councillors Kim Naish, Nigel Offen, Gerard Oxford,
Helen Chuah, Bill Frame, Pauline Hazell, Peter Higgins and
Terry Sutton.

Substitute Members : All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members or 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 agenda items 6 to 9 are standard items for which there may be no business to consider.

Pages

1. Welcome and Announcements

(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:

- action in the event of an emergency;
- mobile phones switched off or to silent;
- 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

1 - 8

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 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. 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.

8. Referred items under the Call in Procedure

To consider any decisions taken under the Call in Procedure.

9. Decisions taken under special urgency provisions

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

10. Bus Operation in Colchester

9 - 15

See report from the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration.

11. Work Programme

16 - 17

See report from the Head of Corporate Management.

12. 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).

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

12 FEBRUARY 2013

Present :- Councillor Beverly Davies (Chairman)
Councillors Helen Chuah, Bill Frame, Pauline Hazell,
Peter Higgins, Kim Naish, Gerard Oxford and
Terry Sutton

Substitute Members :- Councillor Will Quince for Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor Nick Barlow for Councillor Nigel Offen

Also in Attendance :- Councillor Paul Smith

24. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held **15 January 2013** and **28 January 2013** were confirmed as a correct record.

25. Councillor Locality Budgets

Mrs. Amanda Chidgey, Democratic Services Manager presented the report on the Councillor Locality Budgets.

Mrs. Chidgey explained that the Locality Budgets had been approved by Cabinet in March 2012, one of a number of Jubilee Projects, and were intended to support a diverse range of local community projects and opportunities.

The Panel was reminded of the agreed guidelines for the budgets as illustrated in Appendix A of the report, and the schedule setting out the applications and the amount of spend so far approved.

In response to Councillor Davies, Mrs. Chidgey confirmed that no carry forwards of the budgets into 2013-14 will be permitted, and the accountants had also confirmed that all requests for funds in this financial year must be submitted by 28 February 2013. Councillor G. Oxford said he believed the one year Councillors are given to spend the money was adequate.

Mrs. Chidgey responded to Councillor Frame, saying that all applications are considered but once approved it is on the understanding that the application is a one-off cost that cannot incur ongoing revenue expenditure. Whilst there needed to be clarity for funding joint partnership applications and applications which did not to constitute gaps in funding (e.g. salt bins) they had been approved during the year so as to avoid declining requests for funds. That said members appreciated that the allocation of funds will get smarter.

In response to Councillor Quince, Mrs. Chidgey said with respect to the cost to administer the scheme, it was a new scheme that had required time to learn and work through the process, and required the need for an accurate audit trail in respect of

budget expenditure. Whilst this had taken time, it was envisaged that this process will become more straightforward in future years.

Councillor Sutton said the report was succinct but informative, and whilst thanking officers for administering the scheme, still believed the process had incurred some additional costs. Mrs. Chidgey said outside of the administrative process, the scheme is reliant on the good will of officers from service areas such as Parks and Recreation, who even during busy times give time to support the scheme.

Councillor Paul Smith, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources responded to Councillors Quince and Sutton, saying Locality Budgets was a fair scheme that embraced localism and applied equally to all Councillors. Councillors had the opportunity to spend money themselves or in partnership with other Councillors or Council partners on local community projects. Councillor Smith said the Locality Budgets are separate to the Government Grants passed directly to the parishes, provided a power to local councillors that they never had before, moved some funds away from centralised budgets and enabled individuality.

Councillor Quince still believed this amounted to a double taxation to local residents, and whilst it was nice to have these budgets, did not think the expenditure was essential and questioned whether it could be justified.

Councillor Naish believed the scheme would benefit from more cooperation between individual ward councillors including those from different political groups.

Councillor Smith, in response to Councillor Davies, could not see any reason why she should not allocate her budget towards a new CCVS vehicle, confirming that one other councillor had already committed funds to the CCVS Transport Scheme. Councillor Davies said it would be useful for members to receive some future guidance on the process and to include officer's advice on the types of projects that would benefit from funding.

Councillor Frame believed that overall the scheme had been a success, with a multitude of things accomplished that had all in some way added to the quality of life of local residents.

RESOLVED that the Panel:-

- i) Commented on and noted the Councillor Locality Budget scheme.
- ii) Consideration be given by the Member Development Group to the provision of an information gathering event on the Locality Budget process and to include officer's advice on the types of projects that would benefit from funding.

26. Sickness Absence

The Panel agreed to review the Council's Sickness Absence following the review of Half Yearly Performance report presented to the Panel at the meeting on 15 January 2013.

Mrs. Jessica Douglas, Senior Manager, Corporate Management presented the Sickness Absence report that provided a detailed analysis of current sickness levels and procedures, together with historical sickness data and benchmarking data to provide the Panel with some context.

In response to Councillor Oxford regards to the difficulty in identifying work related stress and depression in a changing and challenging environment, Mrs. Douglas said there is a need to drill down into current data to try and determine a more accurate assessment of this condition, and the Council has agreed for Anglia Ruskin University to carry out research that it is hopes will provide this information.

Mrs. Douglas also explained that the overall sickness levels for Colchester had recently been skewed due to the high sickness levels of staff within Parking Services, who had themselves been transferred-in from the Councils making up the North Essex Parking Partnership. Proactive management of the situation together with the help and advice of a Human Resources Business Advisor has seen the level of sickness in this service reduce to 9.52 days in December 2012 from a level of 21.65 days in December 2011.

Councillor Hazell expressed concern for staff who may feel a loss of belonging to the Council due to the continuous fundamental service review (FSR) process, prompting Councillor Davies to ask about what help and advice was available to staff in these situations. Mrs. Douglas explained that the Council ensures that each review is supported by a Communications and Engagement Plan, as the one to be considered at this meeting for the FSR for Customer Contact, and whilst the plan targets specific audiences, Council Staff are at the forefront of this process. More specifically staff receives regular updates via staff cascades with face to face briefings from managers, Executive Management presentations and staff workshops, and can self-serve via the intranet. Telephone advice is not available at present and comes at a cost, but the benefits from such a service are being considered.

Mrs. Douglas explained to Councillor Quince that in the past the cost of overtime and agency staff to cover sickness absence had been reported, and it will be possible to report this information in future reports.

RESOLVED that the Panel:-

- i) Considered and commented on the report providing sickness absence in the Council, including how sickness absence is measured and managed corporately and within services.
- ii) Agreed that any future reports on sickness absence will include the cost of overtime and agency staff to cover sickness absence.

27. Welfare Reform

Councillor Frame (in respect of being a Member of the Colne Housing Board) declared non-pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5);

Mrs. Ann Hedges, Executive Director and Mr. Jason Granger, Customer Coordinator, attended the meeting for this item.

Mrs. Hedges provided an overview of the report that detailed the work being undertaken to support the implementation of welfare reform.

Mrs. Hedges informed the Panel that the Council is being very proactive and thorough in the groundwork needed prior to the welfare reform changes commencing on 1 April 2013. This work includes officers within the Customer Services Centre providing Advice Sessions for various groups including Councillors. The Cross Service Team of whom Jason Granger is a member, are identifying and contacting households where key residents are affected by the changes and facing a short-fall in welfare income, and for which a range of support is being offered.

Mrs. Hedges said the proactive communication and advice work in Colchester has led to very positive results, and that was reflected in the comments and praise by Councils and Government, and resulted in Mr. Granger speaking to a range of different Councils about our work.

Councillor Quince took the opportunity to thank officers for their excellent proactive work in forewarning local residents, work that had received national coverage. Councillor Oxford and later Councillor Hazell endorsed Councillor Quince's comments.

Mr. Granger agreed to provide Councillors with a simple guide explaining the changes and with contact names and numbers.

In response to Councillor Naish and his concern for residents who due to physical disability or a lack of on-line facility may feel further vulnerability, it was explained that the Council is sympathetic to this issue and officers are working with Job Centre Plus and the Department of Welfare and Pensions to endeavour to ensure that all affected residents are contacted and advised accordingly. It is acknowledged that these changes will be difficult for some residents but officers are trying to ensure residents are as well prepared as possible. Mrs. Hedges said the work had been helped by officers working in close partnership with Job Centre Plus. Letters and leaflets, and a You Tube video are being used to get key messages to local residents.

In response to Councillor Barlow, Mrs. Hedges and Mr. Granger explained that the implementation of Universal Credit will commence in October 2013, and leading up to this date, a number of pilot projects will be rolled out, starting in April including direct debit projects. This work is part of the overall Communication Plan for residents and partners.

Mrs. Hedges and Mr. Granger explained to Councillor Frame that officers had written to all households in respect of Under Occupation and this work was being done in partnership with landlords as well as residents, and continued in a coordinated approach. In regards to Universal Credit, whilst acknowledging there was a need to increase awareness, there will remain a risk that the new way of working will increase rent arrears. Many residents will require support and be advised on alternative methods of payment such as direct debit.

Councillor Smith said the Council has contacted all London Boroughs to ask if they will inform Colchester if they are intending to transfer residents to Colchester. This was in light of Councillor Quince's concern that welfare reform could force London Boroughs to purchase blocks of houses in Colchester with the sole purpose of transferring their own residents who have complex needs.

RESOLVED that the Panel:-

- i) Noted and commented on the work being undertaken to support the implementation of welfare reform.
- ii) Thanked officers for their proactive communication and advice work to local residents on welfare reform.
- iii) Requested that Councillors are provided with a simple guide explaining the changes and with contact names and numbers.
- iv) Requested that Councillors receive a link to the educational You Tube video.

28. Universal Customer Contact FSR - Communication and Engagement Plan, and Risk Register

Mrs. Pam Donnelly, Executive Director and Mr. Gareth Mitchell, Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration attended the meeting for this item.

Mrs. Donnelly introduced the paper providing an update on the draft Communication and Engagement Plan and Risk Register for the Fundamental Service Review (FSR) of Customer Contact.

Mrs. Donnelly explained that the review was now well under way with the Governance Arrangements close to being finalised and an Implementation Board comprising of cross party members and executive officers now up and running and having met for the first time very recently. The Board will meet regularly to consider themed presentations and progress updates. The Senior Management Team will be updated regularly on the Engagement Plan and Risk Register, led by the Chief Executive and with a clear focus.

Following on from the earlier discussions on stress related symptoms due to the FSR process, Mrs. Donnelly reiterated that whilst the plan targets specific audiences, Council Staff are at the forefront of the process, engaged at every stage with regular updates via staff cascades with face to face briefings from managers.

Mr. Mitchell said the Engagement Plan and Risk Register presented to Members reflected where we have got to and as it was work in progress welcomed any feedback from the Panel.

Mr. Mitchell said the Plan was draft and needs further work but broadly sets out officer's thinking with key elements to focus on. The Plan provided an overview of what is required and the specifically targeted audiences.

With regards to the timetable, Mr. Mitchell said a Resident's Survey is now in progress and will provide a baseline on the satisfaction of the Council's key customers and will be used as a 'tracker' to gauge opinion year on year.

Staff had been contacted via the staff e-magazine and the fourth Staff Cascade fed through the organisation and with the opportunity to ask questions. The Employee Survey was in progress and will again be used as a 'tracker' to gauge how well the FSR is progressing as the changes take affect.

In response to Councillor Davies, Mr. Mitchell said it was hoped that the on-going self participating dialogue between staff and senior management will act as a 'rumour buster'.

Location changes as a result of the FSR are being led by Mrs. Ann Hedges, and the draft plans for the new Customer Services Centre in the Library will soon be at a stage to present to the Implementation Board. Mrs. Donnelly said officers are working with their counterparts at Essex County Council and once the final design is complete it will be made available for full engagement.

Councillor Sutton, member of the Implementation Board confirmed that the Board agree that the staff are extremely important to the whole process and are meeting on a monthly basis to consider progress updates and results of surveys.

Mr. Mitchell confirmed that online surveys provide useful feedback on how people find and use the Colchester website, and will form part of the thinking to encourage residents and general public to move online, and likewise, Mrs. Donnelly said feedback from face to face and telephony interaction will also help shape the organisation by encouraging customers to transact in many ways. In response to Councillor Naish who remained concerned about alienating residents without online facilities, Mrs. Donnelly said vulnerable residents such as the elderly and those with complex needs are at the forefront of the minds of those responsible for the implementation process, and she hoped to reassure members by saying the face to face environment being considered in the Library will be of a higher quality than that experienced by customers at Angel Court, and this was an important aspiration that the Implementation Board is committed to. The new contact centre will allow for confidential conversations and complimenting the customer contact centre, there will be a range of services currently available centrally, that will be made available locally to save residents the expense of travelling into the town centre.

Councillor Oxford said the relocation of the Contact Centre to the Library coupled with the changes to road access and parking in the High Street from March will

disadvantage disabled customers who will need to travel considerably further to get to the new location. It was confirmed that the Library building itself is fully DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant and Mrs. Donnelly said an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) had already been completed, but confirmed that as the process developed and more key milestones are reached, so further EQIAs will be completed. Mrs. Donnelly said she will talk to Mrs. Hedges about the plans for the Library so that as the plans develop a focus group to consider the location will be organised to test the locality for residents with different needs.

In response to Councillor Quince, Mrs. Donnelly said whilst work on the Library as the central point of contact for customers progresses, it has remained work that has been progressing towards a final conclusion since November 2012. In the meantime, the Council still remains obligated to Angel Court and discussions about the future of Angel Court are still ongoing.

Mrs. Donnelly confirmed the Risk Register was presented to the Panel in draft form, a dynamic document changing all the time. The risks are grouped into four headings, ICT, Cultural Change, Financial and External Factors and as the FSR progresses so risks are added and some will change with implementation. Mrs. Donnelly confirmed the register will be presented regularly to the Implementation Board.

Following the earlier discussions, it was agreed that there are risks concerning the Library as the new location and this should be added to the register. In response to Councillor Davies, it was also agreed, in light of the earlier discussions, to add absenteeism as a key risk.

Councillor Higgins said risks are events and some of the risks listed in the register are not events. Mrs. Donnelly said she will take advice on the risks, and ensure all listed risks are 'event' orientated. In response to Councillor Frame, Mrs. Donnelly said as themes within the FSR develop they will be added to the Risk Register

RESOLVED that the Panel:-

- i) Considered and commented on the draft Risk Register and Communications and Engagement Plan in relation to the Customer Contact Fundamental Service Review.
- ii) Requested a focus group is organised to consider the Library as the central contact centre for Council customers, with the sole purpose of testing the locality for customers with different needs, and to feed this information back into the scrutiny process.
- iii) Requested that the Library as the possible location for the Customer Contact Centre and Absenteeism is added to the risk register.
- iv) Agreed for further reviews of the Risk Register take place as part of the Panel's ongoing monitoring role.

29. Work Programme

The Panel noted the extra meeting on 12 March 2013 to review Bus Transportation, including working with the new Bus Station, and with invitations going to officers at Essex County Council and local bus operators.

Councillor Frame, in light of the recent national concerns over food safety standards requested that an item should be added to the future Work Programme for the review of Public Health - Food safety for children at school. Whilst there was not sufficient time to organise this for the March meetings, Mr. Robert Judd, Democratic Services Officer said he would add this item to the Work Programme for consideration by the Panel at the first meeting in 2013/14.

RESOLVED that the Panel commented on and noted the Work Programme 2012/13.



Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Item
10

12 March 2013

Report of	Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration	Author	Paul Wilkinson ☎ 282787
Title	Bus Operation in Colchester		
Wards affected	All		

The Panel is invited to review the operation of Buses in Colchester.

1. Action required

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to review the provision of public transport in the Borough, and the extent to which these operations contribute to the Council's strategic priorities and to make the appropriate recommendations to Cabinet for consideration.

2. Reason for scrutiny

- 2.1 A review of public transport was undertaken by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on the 10 January 2012. It was resolved at the meeting that the panel would consider a further review in 2012-13, after the introduction of the new bus station.
- 2.2 Essex County Council, the bus operators and C-Bus, the local bus user group, have been invited to the meeting.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The report sets out why buses are strategically important in the transport system and identifies a number of projects that Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council and the operators have been working on since the January 2012 panel meeting.

4. The Strategic Overview

4.1 Growth and Policy agenda

- 4.1.1 The current Core Strategy sets out the growth agenda for Colchester. The policies direct the location of the growth to the main urban area of Colchester, where there is good access to a variety of opportunities and services. Policies strive to locate development along or near existing bus routes and seek to make improvements to help address congestion and deliver sustainable development.

4.2 Why a good bus network is important?

- 4.2.1 A good bus network is important as buses are efficient in moving large volumes of people. A full bus makes better use of road space helping to address congestion, is an inclusive form of transport for the community, and has less environmental impact.

4.2.2 The bus is accessible to all especially those without access to the car or do not drive. For those without access to a car or not having a full driving licence approximately 35% of trips are by bus. For those with access to the car and a driving licence, the share is significantly lower at 4% (Colchester Travel Diary 2007).

4.2.3 Within Colchester Borough 95% of households are within 400m of at least an hourly service between 7 and 9am. However, there is a major market of people who don't travel by bus and improvements to the bus service can increase patronage.

4.3 Features of a good bus service

4.3.1 There are seven demandsⁱ expected of a bus service and there are various ways in which these demands can be met. These are set out in table one below.

Table 1 – the Demands of a Useful Bus Service

Customer Demands	How to meet the demands
It takes me where I want to go	Proximity of stops Connectivity
It takes me when I want to go	Frequency Duration of service
It is a good use of my time	Proximity of stops Frequency Speed and reduced delay Civility
It is a good use of my money	Setting the right price
It respects me	Civility
I can trust it	Frequency Reliability
It gives me freedom to change my plans	Reliability Presentation Simplicity

¹ Human Transit, How Clearer Thinking about Public Transit can enrich our communities and our lives – Jarrett Walker

4.3.2 Addressing all seven demands is important to create a quality bus network, but the most important features of a successful service are:

- Frequency

High frequency services reduce waiting time, avoid the need to know the timetable, (“if I miss one another will be along shortly”), and interchange between high frequency services is minimised.

Within Colchester there a number of high frequency services such as the 65 Tollgate to Highwoods and the 1 Greenstead to Shrub End on 10 minute frequencies.

- Reliability - does the bus service run predictability day after day?

A reliable service gives the user confidence. The biggest reliability issue impacting on buses is traffic congestion. Bus priority measures are currently limited to North Station Road, Bruff Close, Middleborough, Mile End Road, Maldon Road and Greenstead Road/Hythe Station Area.

The town centre experimental traffic regulation orders will add additional bus priority in the town centre.

- Location of stops - does the bus stop near me and my destination?

Guidance suggests that development should not be more than 400m from a bus stop. Even in towns and cities with intensive bus services, there is an acceptance that the bus user will need to walk to and from the bus stop. However there is a need to balance the proximity of stops and the distance between stops so not to create a slow stopping service.

The major locations such as the town centre, the railway station, the hospital, the further education centres and the major food stores all have stops close to them.

Overall in Colchester there is the foundation of a good service, but enhancements are needed, especially if new customers are to be attracted.

5 Strategic issues

5.1 Delivering the Northern Connectivity Corridor - Park and Ride and the Northern Approaches Road

5.1.1 This is the major bus corridor from the town centre northwards, to the railway station, serving the hospital and urban areas to the north of the rail line. Over 600 buses pass the railway station daily. North Colchester is the subject of major housing and employment development and to be sustainable, public transport has an important role to play.

5.1.2 The Park and Ride site to the north of the A12 was granted detailed planning permission in August 2011 by ECC and is to be delivered in the autumn of 2014. CBC supports the delivery of this priority scheme. The delivery of the site and the necessary infrastructure to deliver the scheme is subject to a submission to the Department of Transport for "pinch point funding". Park and Ride complements Traffic Reduction in the Town centre allowing commuters/visitors to Colchester to park next to the A12 and catch the bus into the town centre.

5.1.3 The final part of the Northern Approach Road infrastructure linking Axial Way to the existing Northern Approach Road will start construction in May 2013 for completion later this year. This will provide the connection between the park and ride site to the existing Northern Approaches Road.

5.2 Air quality in the town centre

5.2.1 A number of roads in the town centre have been declared as part of the Town Centre Air Quality Management Area. A proportion of the air quality problems are due to slow moving vehicle traffic and vehicles with "heavy" diesel engines. Bus operators have been made aware of the issues relating to air quality and that heavy diesel engines are a significant contributor to poor air quality, especially nitrogen dioxide. The town centre traffic reduction scheme should address this in parts of the town centre and will be monitored.

5.2.2 CBC will shortly be engaging specialists to help develop a low emission strategy for Colchester. This will take approximately 18 months to develop. A stakeholder group will be set up to which the bus operators will be invited.

5.2.3 To meet the requirements of DEFRA, an interim Air Quality Action Plan will be submitted in the June 2013.

5.3 The Bus Service Operator Grant Reform

- 5.3.1 Bus operators receive a Government grant for operating services. This has been in place since 1964 with little change and relates to mileage run and fuel use. The grant makes marginal services commercially viable, and reduces the cost of the services local transport authorities choose to support under contract.
- 5.3.2 As part of the central Government localism and climate change agendas it is changing the way in which the grant is paid along with a 20% reduction in the amount paid on fuel. The reform is on-going.
- 5.3.3 The grant for Local Authority tendered services is now paid to the Local Transport Authority for local decision making. The commercial service element will still be paid direct to the operator but the intention is to reform the payment to move away from a payment based on fuel use.
- 5.3.4 The implications of this reform have yet to work its way through the system and there are a number of other similar pressures affecting the bus industry:
- The increasing price of fuel against a background of reduced fuel grant
 - Concessionary fares – a significant number of passengers do not pay directly or pay full fare for the use of the bus.
- 5.3.5 Changes are likely to be incremental but typical initial responses to these pressures could include:
- Increased fares
 - Reduction in commercially operated services
 - Rerouting services to make them more efficient to operate
- 5.3.6 Changes in the commercially operated services could put additional strain on the budget for providing bus services under contract to ECC. There are currently incentives in the grant system to upgrade the bus fleet and systems and through further investment there are ways to offset the grant changes.

6. Projects

6.1 Relocation of the bus station to Osborne Street

The bus station was relocated to Osborne Street on the 18th November 2012. The physical changes were delivered on time and services which called into the Queen Street Temporary Bus Station were transferred to stops at Osborne Street/Stanwell Street, the top of East Hill, and Queen Street. The design and reallocation of services was developed in detail between ECC/CBC and the operators. Some changes have been made to where some bus services stop since opening.

6.1.2 Passenger facilities

Since the opening the biggest concern has been the level of passenger facilities' for the rural services which in the main call at Stanwell Street. Additional seating and larger shelters are being designed to be installed.

6.1.3 New passenger information panels were installed and further units are to be installed at other locations. The information panels are compatible with the Royal National Institute for the Blind React 3 system which provides talking messages for the blind or partially sighted.

6.1.4 The on site supervisor

It was recognised that with the changes to bus services it would be necessary to have a supervisor in Osborne Street. A full time supervisor was appointed by Colchester Borough Council. The bus operators also provided supervisors. Their main functions is to help direct passengers to the new stops and ensure that buses stopped at the correct location and did not create delays by dwelling on a stop for too long. With the

cooperation of the bus operators the supervisors were allowed to direct any bus company driver to ensure smooth operation of Osborne Street. They have also had to ask private cars and taxis dropping off passengers not to block bus stops.

6.1.5 A voluntary operational agreement for the Town Centre

Through development of the relocation of the bus services from the temporary station a close working relationship was established with the bus operators. Detailed information was shared between operators and ECC to enable the allocation of bus services at the new stops in East Hill, Queen Street, Osborne Street and Stanwell Street. Nearly 1,800 bus services per day were reallocated to the stops in Osborne Street and Stanwell Street

6.1.6 The bus companies work in a competitive environment but to ensure fair and sensible allocation of bus stops there is a consensus that it would be beneficial to establish a town centre operational agreement. They would look to ECC as the local transport authority to arbitrate disputes.

6.1.7 Agreements from other towns are being reviewed. The agreement could also cover the role of the on street supervisor and how they are funded.

6.2 Investment in real time passenger information systems

It is recognised that supply of information to the customer is important. The real time information systems across Essex and in Colchester are being upgraded by ECC. A new system has been procured and the decommissioning of the old system has already begun. The on-street displays will be upgraded and showing departures by June.

6.2.1 Initially the displays will show timetable information until the operators have upgraded their ticket machines and are able to provide live departure information. The system will also allow for better access to information via websites and smart phone applications (apps).

6.2.2 As part of the system upgrade the bus companies are upgrading their ticket machines which will provide information back to the operator on operation of the network. The operator can then make improved decisions on what action to take when there are delays and through the real time information displays, they will be able relay messages to customers.

6.3 Experimental Town Centre Traffic Reduction

Experimental Traffic Regulation orders will be introduced on Sunday 17th March. Buses will continue to be able to operate around the town centre. They will be given priority up North Hill and into the High Street where other vehicles (except buses, taxis, private hire vehicles, motorcycles and cycles) will be restricted from 11am through to 6pm. At the end of the High Street a bus lane will allow buses, taxis, private hire vehicles, motorcycles and cycles to turn right down Queen Street.

6.3.1 These changes will give priority to buses around the town centre with expected improvements in air quality. As this is an 18 month experiment the changes will be monitored and the bus companies along with businesses and community representatives have been invited to the monitoring group.

7. **Strategic Plan references**

This report covers the following priority, actions and outputs of the strategic plan

7.1 Priority Area - Promoting sustainability and reducing congestion

7.1.1 Action:

- Support the reduction of unnecessary traffic in the town centre. Use the public realm strategy to develop package of measures to enhance the vitality and economic prosperity of the area.

Outputs:

- Implement a scheme to improve public transport access and reduce traffic in the High Street as part of the better town centre project
- Improvements in air quality.

Comment – Experimental Traffic Reduction Orders to be implemented in March 2013.

7.1.2 Action:

- Develop with Essex County Council the sustainable transport infrastructure for the North Colchester Connectivity corridor.

Outputs:

- 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 NAR2 Rapid Transit Corridor.

Comment – CBC support Pinch Point funding bid submitted for Park and Ride and bus priority measures. The full planning application for the NAR2 Rapid Transport Corridor is to be determined in March 2013. CBC have supported ECC through negotiations with the land owners to deliver the NAR3 and provided growth information to the Local Enterprise Partnership to secure Growth Point Funding.

7.2 Priority Area - Regenerating our borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure

7.3 The work undertaken in changing the public transport operation in the town centre facilitates the delivery of actions under this priority area including redevelopment of the St Botolphs Quarter and release of land back to the St Thomas More School as per the legal agreement.

8. Consultation

8.1 Consultation has been carried out as part of specific projects. Consultation and engagement has also continued in respect of key stakeholders such as access groups and bus operators for the relocation of the bus station, town centre traffic reduction, business groups in respect of projects and local residents and other identified groups.

9. Publicity considerations

9.1 Publicity opportunities have been ongoing through the Better Town Centre Programme with regular engagement events held in the town, a dedicated website and other stakeholder meetings.

9.2 Information has been published on ECC and CBC website in February 2013 for the introduction of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders for the Reduction in Traffic in the Town Centre area. Responses have been provided to those who commented to the orders that were published in March 2012.

9.3. A commitment has been made to engage with stakeholders on the development of the Air Quality Management Area Action Plans

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 Haven Gateway Growth Point Funding has been secured for Osborne Street/Stanwell Street Bus Station and for Traffic Reduction in the Town Centre. With the agreement of ECC the developer funding was also used for.
- 10.2 The Council continues to work with Essex County Council on the delivery of Park and Ride including securing the necessary funding for the facility and the bus route

11. Other Standard References

- 11.1 Having considered equality, diversity and human rights, health and safety and community safety implications, there are none which are significant to the matters in this report. EQIA's have been developed for the key regeneration projects managed by the Council.

Background Papers

None



Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Item
11

12 March 2013

Report of	Head of Corporate Management	Author	Robert Judd Tel. 282274
Title	Work Programme 2012-13		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

**This report sets out the 2012-13 Work Programme for the
Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

1. Action Required

1.1 The Panel is asked to consider and note the work programme for 2012-13.

2. Reason for Action

2.1 This function forms part of the Panel's Terms of Reference in the Constitution.

3. Setting the Work Programme

3.1 Overview and scrutiny needs to be member-led, with Members proactive in determining the work programme and ensuring its relevance to the future needs of the Council. Members need to take a lead on the work to be undertaken, focusing on strategic and significant issues, and the programme needs to be flexible to allow for relevant other items to be included.

4. Meeting 19 March 2013

4.1 Members are reminded that the meeting next Tuesday for the review of "Investment in Colchester's Arts and Culture" will be held at the "The Auditorium, firstsite".

5. Standard and Strategic Plan References

5.1 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, of which scrutiny is a part, underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

5.2 Scrutiny is a key function to ensure decisions have been subject to full appraisal and that they are in line with the Council's strategic aims. The role of scrutiny is also an important part of the Council's risk management and audit process, helping to check that risks are identified and challenged.

5.3 There is no publicity, equality and diversity, human rights, community safety, health and safety, risk management or financial implications in this matter.

Meeting date / reviews	Portfolio
12 June 2012 1. Annual Scrutiny Report 2. 2011-12 Year-end Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action Plan	Leader / Communities & Leisure Deputy Leader / Street and Waste Services
11 July 2012 1. Call in hearing – Decision STR-001-12 Hythe Forward funding contribution	Communities and Leisure Leader / Business & Resources
17 July 2012 1. ECC Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy – ECC presentation on proposals (submissions to ECC by 31-July-12. Strategy presented to September's ECC HWB. Clare Hardy, Senior Manager ECC HWB to give a presentation. 2. Budget Strategy, Timetable and MTFF	Communities and Leisure Leader / Business & Resources
29 August 2012 1. HWB – Local arrangements, including the work and progress of Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Cllr Ann Naylor, ECC PH HWB and Clare Hardy to attend. Dr Gordon and Dr Sweeney (CCG) to attend. A 2013 meeting to be arranged to review the outcomes from the new Strategy	Communities and Leisure
18 September 2012 1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)	Planning, Community Safety (CS) and Culture
30 October 2012 1. Pre Cabinet review of Fundamental Service Review of Customer Contact 2. Localising Council Tax Support	Cabinet Business and Resources
11 December 2012 – cancelled	
15 January 2013 1. 2012-13 6-monthly Performance report and Strategic Plan Action Plan	Leader / Communities & Leisure
28 January 2013 (extra) 1. Call-in – Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Enforcement Powers	Street and Waste Services
12 February 2013 1. Welfare Reform (Lead Officer Ann Hedges, Executive Director) 2. Member's Locality Budgets 3. Communications and Engagement Plan, and Risk Register, all related to the UCC FSR 4. Sickness absence (Head of Corporate Management)	Business and Resources / Communities and Leisure Leader / Business and Resources and Business and Resources
12 March 2013 1. Public Transportation review, including new Bus Station / NAR & P&R – Invitation to all Bus Operators	Street and Waste Services (Public Transport Infrastructure)
19 March 2013 1. Investment in Colchester's Arts and Culture – Venue "The Auditorium, firstsite"	Planning, Community Safety and Culture

