

Policy Review and Development Panel

Grand Jury Room, Town Hall
7 November 2011 at 6.00pm

The Policy Review Panel deals with reviewing policies and issues at the request of the Cabinet or Portfolio Holder, or pro-actively identifying issues that may require review; dealing with those issues either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups, monitoring progress of these Groups and assessing their final reports.

Information for Members of the Public

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Terms of Reference

Policy Review and Development Panel

- To review strategies and policies at the request of the Cabinet either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups, and to make recommendations back to Cabinet for decision.
- To review issues at the request of a Portfolio Holder either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups and to make recommendations back to the Portfolio Holder for decision.
- To monitor progress of Task and Finish Groups and assess their final reports prior to their submission to either the Cabinet or the Portfolio Holder.
- To proactively identify issues that may require review and improvement and to seek Cabinet's agreement as to whether and how they should be examined.

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
7 November 2011 at 6:00pm**

Members

Chairman : Councillor Nigel Offen.
Deputy Chairman : Councillor Mark Cory.
Councillors Nigel Chapman, Julie Young, Margaret Fairley-Crowe, Marcus Harrington and Lesley Scott-Boutell.

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 6 are normally brief and the last Agenda Item is a standard one 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 personal interests they may have in the items on the agenda.

If the personal interest arises because of a Councillor's membership of or position of control or management on:

- any body to which the Councillor has been appointed or nominated by the Council; or
- another public body

then the interest need only be declared if the Councillor intends to speak on that item.

If a Councillor declares a personal interest they must also consider whether they have a prejudicial interest. If they have a prejudicial interest they must leave the room for that item.

If a Councillor wishes to make representations on an item on which they have a prejudicial interest they may do so if members of the public are allowed to make representations. In such circumstances a Councillor must leave the room immediately once they have finished speaking.

An interest is considered to be prejudicial if a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard it as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.

Councillors should consult paragraph 7 of the Meetings General Procedure Rules for further guidance.

5. 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.

6. Minutes

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To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 8 August 2011.

7. Equality and Diversity // Annual Update Report

7 - 33

See report from the Head of Corporate Management

8. Magistrates' Courts Task and Finish Group // Final Report 34 - 38

See report from Executive Director, Ann Wain

9. Work Programme 2011-12 39 - 43

See report from the Head of Corporate Management

10. 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).

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

8 AUGUST 2011

Present :- Councillor Nigel Offen (Chairman)
Councillors Nigel Chapman, Mark Cory,
Margaret Fairley-Crowe, Marcus Harrington,
Lesley Scott-Boutell and Julie Young

6. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 28 February, 18 May and 20 June 2011 were confirmed as a correct record.

7. Update on Introduction of 20 mph Speed Limits in Colchester

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration concerning the Department of Transport's Strategic Framework for Road Safety and the potential introduction of 20 mph speed limits in Colchester.

Paul Wilkinson, Transportation Policy Manager, attended the meeting to assist members in their discussions. Mr Wilkinson explained that since the Panel had last considered the issue of 20mph speed limits in September 2010, a number of policy documents have been released.

Essex County Council had published its third Local Transport Plan in April 2011 and had contained key wording in the chapter on Improving Safety:

"The Council will work closely with the Essex district councils, Essex police and local communities to improve people's perceptions of safety when travelling by foot or by bike. The types of measure will include:

- *considering the introduction of 20mph speed limits in residential areas, where there is strong community support and where large numbers of pedestrians and cyclists can be expected"*

In addition, the Government released in May 2011 a Strategic Framework for Road Safety which included "more local and community decision making from decentralisation and providing local information to citizens to enable them to challenge priorities as one of the key themes. This was followed in June with Norman Baker, the Regional and Local Transport Minister making a statement on measures to reduce time consuming and costly bureaucracy for councils wanting to use 20mph schemes.

Essex County Council's position had been set out in a response to a letter sent from the Leader of Colchester Borough Council to Essex County Council's portfolio holder for Highways and Transportation:

- The Speed Management Strategy set out the criteria for introduction of 20mph in

- Essex and was in accordance with Department of Transport guidelines;
- 20mph was being introduced as part of a capital improvement scheme in a central area of Chelmsford, and was currently under construction. Review and monitoring would take place after the scheme was completed;
 - The results from other towns were being reviewed but the introduction of 20mph across wide areas in the following 12/24 months was not expected;
 - Acknowledgement that Colchester was very interested in 20mph but would need to understand the benefits and have greater clarity on funding.

The County Council was introducing 20mph limits in new developments, in some isolated locations outside schools in rural locations and in small residential areas (including Wivenhoe). The Council would also be reviewing its Road Safety Strategy against the Government's new strategic framework.

Portsmouth City Council had been the first local authority to introduce 20mph limits on a city wide basis in residential areas. The Interim Evaluation Report on the scheme was attached to the report and included information on knowledge transfer, obstacles to implementation, the lessons learnt and transferability potential. Significantly, in certain areas of the city, where the speeds had remained high, Portsmouth City Council was considering the introduction of physical measures.

The Panel gave particular consideration to the following issues:-

The need for comprehensive cost benefit analysis to be undertaken to demonstrate the value of speed reduction in terms of the cost of accidents to society as a whole, quality of life as well as road safety statistics themselves;

- The types of physical measures considered to be suitable for speed reduction schemes, such as speed tables and speed cushions;
- The timescales involved in implementing road traffic orders, consultation exercises and the obtaining of Department for Transport consents;
- The overwhelming benefits of such schemes, if only in relation to the reduction in accidents involving children;
- The need to undertake further dialogue with Essex County Council's current Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation, Councillor Tracey Chapman, in order to ascertain her views on the issue;
- The clear evidence available from attendance at Neighbourhood Action Panels of the weight of opposition to higher speeds locally;
- The need for this initiative to include the rural areas of the Borough as well as residential areas closer to the town centre and the potential to offer a rural location as a pilot for Essex County Council to consider.

RESOLVED that a letter be sent by the Chairman, Councillor Nigel Offen, on behalf of the Policy Review and Development Panel to Essex County Councillor Tracey Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation setting out the Panel's commitment to the introduction of 20 mph speed limits in residential areas and inviting her to attend a meeting of the reconvened 20 mph Task and Finish Group which had been set up to look into the matter in greater detail.

8. Colchester Joint Protocol for the Management of Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Environmental and Protective Services giving details of the current joint protocol for the management of Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments. The Panel members were invited, in their advisory capacity, to comment on the revised new Protocol prior to its formal adoption by the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Diversity, in accordance with the proposals endorsed by Cabinet.

Beverley Jones, Head of Environmental and Protective Services, attended the meeting to assist members in their discussions. Mrs Jones explained that, in preparation for the eviction of travellers from the Dale Farm site in Basildon, all Local Authorities were reviewing and updating their protocols for dealing with unauthorised encampments. Essex Police and Essex County Council had reviewed and updated their policies and protocols and it was important to incorporate these changes into this Council's protocol to ensure a consistent and lawful approach to the management of unauthorised encampments.

The current joint protocol had been in use since 2002 and effectively acted as a charter or agreement offered to Gypsy / Travellers in Essex. Additionally a Colchester Travellers Sub Group had been formed in 2003 was formed with a remit to review the Council's experience and policies on Gypsy / Traveller issues. The overriding objectives of the Protocol were:

- To develop a fair and consistent approach to the management of unauthorised encampments by public bodies,
- To ensure people were treated with respect, giving consideration to the variety of ethnic and racial origins, different lifestyles, needs and welfare issues, and
- To ensure consideration was given to both the needs of those on unauthorised encampments and of the settled community.

The Protocol and the Code were drafted having regard to legislation, Government Guidance and the European Convention on Human Rights. It was further explained that Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers were protected under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Equality Act 2010 made it unlawful to treat someone less favourably on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

The Council's current approach to managing unauthorised encampments was in accordance with the Code and was therefore deemed to comply with equalities legislation. An Equalities Impact Assessment for this approach had also been published on the Council's website.

Essex Police had recently updated its Policy for Unauthorised Encampments and how it would respond to reports of any persons residing as trespassers on land. In determining the nature of this response, the Police would have regard to issues of behaviour, whether criminal, antisocial or nuisance, in combination with the impact on the landowner and local communities.

The Joint Protocol had been explicit in its intent that, subject to certain criteria being met, Council would adopt a position of tolerance towards the encampment. The criteria for tolerance were summarised as:

- Encampments were to be kept small (3 caravans or slightly larger) and large encampments were required to split into smaller groups;
- Encampments were to be kept away from built up areas;
- Gypsy / Travellers were to look after the land and not burn rubbish (the Council would provide refuse sacks and collect bagged rubbish);
- Vehicles were to be parked safely and only on land not needed for another purpose;
- Animals were to be kept under control.

Other issues addressed by the Code included the minimum acceptable distance between groups of Gypsy / Travellers, the effect of the occupation on amenities, damage to property and land, acceptable behaviour, the lighting of fires, the distance to be moved on leaving the site and future re-occupation of the site.

Mrs Jones went on to explain that the Police had powers to evict people from unauthorised encampments. These powers were discretionary and would only be used where six or more vehicles were present and behaviour or conduct was considered to be inappropriate or where the impact of the encampment on others was deemed unacceptable.

Councillor Beverley Oxford attended and, with the approval of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. She referred to the experiences since recent gypsy/traveller encampments in St John's and Highwoods. She considered that the travellers had not complied with the Code and residents had been denied the use of their own land. She was of the view that the concerns of local residents had been ignored and that the Police had failed to use the powers available to them. She felt that it was important that these experiences should not be allowed to be repeated and she voiced her concerns that the land at Severalls Lane, designated as an official gypsy / traveller site but awaiting all the necessary consents to be issued, had nevertheless been accepted by the traveller community as able to be occupied.

The Panel was invited to comment on the issues involved in order to inform the work to revise the Council's protocol, bearing in mind that the review would need to have regard to the new Essex Police Policy, relevant legislation and Government Guidance, namely:

- Communities and Local Government – Local authorities and Gypsies and Travellers: a guide to responsibilities and powers;
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – Guide to effective use of enforcement powers Part 1: Unauthorised encampments

As well as the principles of good enforcement:

- Clear standards & expectations,
- Consistency of approach,
- Proportionality and

- Transparency in decision-making.

The Panel gave particular consideration to the following issues:-

- The need for full consultation to be undertaken with the gypsy / traveller community;
- The need for an up to date Equality Impact Assessment to be undertaken as the new policy is being formulated;
- The need for guidance to be formulated within the context of the new policy regarding the role of ward councillors;
- An acknowledgement that a less tolerant approach might be required in respect of unauthorised encampments on privately owned land;
- The potential to earmark a number of sites across the County of Essex on a short term basis for use by gypsies / travellers pending the availability of more permanent options;
- The fact that Colchester had already identified one area of land in the Borough for designation as an official gypsy / traveller site and there was a need for a co-ordinated approach to deliver additional designated sites across the County as a whole;
- The potential to utilise the Essex Chief Executives forum to accept collective responsibility for gypsy / traveller encampments in the County;
- The exercise undertaken by this Council which led to the designation of the land at Severalls Lane as a site for use as an official gypsy / traveller site and the possibility of looking again at the work involved in this exercise and the sites which were rejected at this time;
- The measures being put in place to protect vulnerable or sensitive areas of land from unauthorised encampments and the need for appropriate ward councillors to be notified of the locations identified;
- The need to fully communicate with local communities, residents and Parish Councils;
- The principles set out in the joint protocol, in respect of tolerance, lighting of bonfires, flexibility regarding numbers of vehicles on pitches, a risk assessment type approach to management, generally continued to have relevance in the current circumstances.

Some members of the Panel expressed concerns regarding the timescales involved in considering this important issue, especially given the sensitivities, legal restraints and recently changed guidelines and were of the view that more detailed information about these issues would be of further assistance.

RECOMMENDED to the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Diversity that:-

(i) The revised Protocol for the Management of Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments be formulated bearing in mind the various issues discussed by the Panel, but in particular addressing the following specific matters:

- A framework for ward councillors;
- An updated Equality Impact Assessment;
- Formal consultation to be undertaken with the gypsy / traveller community;

- The inclusion of a detailed Communication Plan.
- (ii) The revised Protocol be submitted to the Panel for consideration prior to its formal adoption by the Portfolio Holder;
- (iii) Councillors be notified of the areas of land within their ward which may have been identified as vulnerable or sensitive;
- (iv) Suitable sites be identified as soon as possible for potential use on a short term basis, should the situation require it and progress on this issue be reported back to the Panel;
- (v) The co-operation of other Essex authorities be sought in adopting a coordinated approach to deliver additional designated gypsy / traveller sites across the County as a whole.

9. Work Programme 2011-12

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Corporate Management giving details of the provisional scheduling in the Panel's work programme for the year, bearing in mind that this was likely to evolve as items of business were commenced and concluded.

The report provided an update on the current situation regarding the four Task and Finish Groups and the impact the work of these would have on the composition of the work programme.

RESOLVED that the contents and scheduling of the work programme and the current situation regarding the various Task and Finish Groups be noted.



Policy Review and Development Panel

Item
7

7 November 2011

Report of	Head of Corporate Management	Author	Andrew Harley ☎ 506452 Chris Reed ☎ 282240
Title	Equality and Diversity - Annual Update report		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

The Panel is invited to review the changes following the Equality Act 2010, and to consider progress to date and future plans.

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to review the changes and progress made following the Equality Act 2010 and future plans.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 At its meeting on 11 January 2010, the Panel approved the Council's first Single Equality Scheme, which included a three-year action plan. The Panel agreed that an update should be brought to the Panel annually on the progress against the action plan.
- 2.2 The introduction of the Equality Act in autumn 2010 has in many ways meant that the Single Equality Scheme has or will be superseded. However, the current situation is one of transition as the full detail of the Act's Codes of Practice and statutory guidance are yet to be clarified, with some aspects not coming into effect until April 2012.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not applicable. It is important that the Panel has the opportunity to receive an Annual Update on Equality and Diversity to assist in the effective implementation of our policies, procedures and practices, and to support our statutory duties in this area.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 Appendix A gives an update against the actions shown in the Single Equality Scheme.

5. Year of Transition - 2011

- 5.1 The Equality Act 2010 replaced the existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It included a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 6 April 2011 and replaced the separate public sector equality duties relating to race, disability and sex.

It has widened duties to also cover age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment more fully. The Equality Duty consists of a General Duty, set out in the Act itself, and Specific Duties imposed through regulations.

5.2 In January 2011, Councils received a five-volume document from the Equality and Human Rights Commission setting out the draft regulations, and an implementation date of April 2011. It was due to be followed in March 2011 by the statutory Codes of Practice, but instead two consultation papers were published that month by the Government - the [Equality Act 2010: The public sector Equality Duty: reducing bureaucracy. Policy review paper](#) and [Reform of the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#). These signalled a clear change in approach and timescales, along with the removal of many of the draft regulations published in January.

5.3 The Council has needed to maintain a responsive and flexible approach to Equality and Diversity during 2011, while it awaited both the results of these consultation papers and the arrival of detailed Codes of Practices and statutory guidance. As at October, the outcome of the review of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is awaited; the specific duties regulations came into force in September, and the 'quick start' guide to these regulations was published by the Government Equalities Office on 21 October – with the statutory guidance due to then follow on from the Commission.

6. Equality Act 2010 – the General Duty and the Specific Duties

6.1 The Act aims to make the law simpler, to remove inconsistencies, and strengthen protection in some situations. It is also a shift away from 'single issue' equality tracks towards a broader view and facilitating good relations between all groups and individuals. The Act introduced 'protected characteristics', which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly. Every person has one or more of these protected characteristics, so the Act protects everyone against unfair treatment on those grounds.

6.2 The **General Duty** came into force in April 2011. Its aim is to integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public bodies, and across all its functions. All councils, including their councillors and staff, must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

The new Equality Duty covers the following eight 'protected characteristics': age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The duty also covers marriage and civil partnership, but not for all aspects of the duty.

6.3 Section 153 of the Equality Act 2010 gives Ministers powers to impose **Specific Duties** through regulations. The Specific Duties are legal requirements designed to help public bodies meet the General Duty. The Government consulted on their proposed Public Sector Equality duties and published the [Specific Duties](#) on 10 September 2011:

The Specific Duties require public bodies to publish:

- information to demonstrate their compliance with the General Duty, by 31 January 2012 and then at least annually, and
- one or more specific, measurable equality objectives, by 6 April 2012 and then at least every four years.

- 6.4 The Government Equalities Office has confirmed that the “Specific Duties are designed to enable those public bodies to carry out the public sector Equality Duty more effectively. They are designed to ensure that public bodies are transparent about their compliance with the Equality Duty. By publishing information about their equality performance and objectives, public bodies will be accountable to the people and communities they serve.”

We currently await the publication of the detailed Codes of Practices and statutory guidance by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to accompany the Specific Duties. However, the Government Equalities Office’s ‘quick start’ guide published on 21 October is clear that we need to make our own judgement as to what information is necessary and proportionate in order to demonstrate our compliance with the Act.

7. Equality Act 2010 – requirement to publish information

- 7.1 As shown at 6.3, the Act requires us to publish information by 31 January 2012 “to demonstrate our compliance with the general Equality Duty... in particular, publish information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are their employees (for bodies with 150 or more staff) and others affected by their policies and practices (such as service users)... in such a manner that the information is accessible to the public.” We intend to do this on the Council’s [website](#), in an annual report to this Panel, and in line with the guidance when that is available later in 2011.

- 7.2 Information to demonstrate our compliance with the General Duty currently includes:

- Single Equality Scheme and action plan
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Website section dedicated to Equality and Diversity
- The Council’s external accreditation as an ‘achieving’ organisation under the Equality Framework for local government
- Workforce statistics
- Work undertaken by the Council’s Research and Engagement Team about service users, customers and the borough’s population.

We had already published equality monitoring information (‘workforce statistics’) about employees on our website each year. The existing format has been updated to include all protected characteristics, and a project to encourage staff to make sure that their details are current and complete is underway. In the summer of 2011, all staff with access to e-mail were sent a specific invitation to do this, and staff without e-mail access will be approached to do this as and when suitable mailing opportunities arise.

We have a wide range of information about who uses our services, held by individual service groups and for the Council as a whole. We also have a Research and Engagement Team who coordinate the effective collation and dissemination of appropriate data so that we can reflect the changing needs of the borough’s population.

- 7.3 The Government’s view is that this “31 January 2012 deadline for public authorities is important, as it will ensure that the public, and voluntary and community sector organisations, have the opportunity to review the data that has been published before public bodies set their equality objectives in April (2012).

This is a key Government aim - to ensure that public bodies are transparent and accountable to the people they serve for their work on equality. The timescale for the regulations will give people at least two months to review the data that has been published, and engage with and influence public bodies, from an informed perspective, about what their equality objectives should be.”

8. Equality Act 2010 – requirement to publish equality objectives

- 8.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires us to prepare and publish one or more specific, measurable equality objectives by 6 April 2012.
- 8.2 Our current equality objectives were set out in the Single Equality Scheme 2010-13, and approved in 2010. There were ten equality objectives, with a 40-page action plan.
- 8.3 The review of the Council's Strategic Plan for 2012-15 is underway. This provides an ideal opportunity to incorporate this more focused and streamlined requirement for "one or more specific, measurable equality objectives" into our updated Strategic Plan, and to demonstrate the importance of Equality and Diversity as a key priority for the Council.

9. Equality Act 2010 – meeting our statutory obligations

- 9.1 2011 has been a year of transition and change in the field of equality policy and practice. There has been a marked shift away from proscribed, detailed requirements, with each equality strand being viewed as a 'standalone' issue – and moving towards a more inclusive approach to "foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who don't".
- 9.2 Beyond the two publication requirements shown at 7 and 8 above, it is left up to public bodies to decide how they will go about ensuring compliance. The following principles from case law on the previous equality duties will, however, continue to apply - to comply with the General Equality Duty, a public authority must ensure that:
- Staff and leadership are aware of the duty's requirements. Compliance involves 'a conscious approach and state of mind'. This means that decision-makers must be fully aware of the implications of the duty when making decisions about policies and practices.
 - The duty is complied with before and at the time that a particular policy is under consideration and a decision is taken. A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
 - Consideration of the need to advance equality forms an integral part of the decision-making process. The duty must be exercised in such a way that it influences the final decision.
 - Any third parties exercising public functions on its behalf are required to comply with the duty.
 - Regard is given to the need to advance equality when a policy is implemented and reviewed.
- 9.3 We have used our best endeavours to keep informed and up-to-date with the changing policy picture at national level, and to interpret this into what we need to do and publish locally. We believe that this has enabled us to meet our obligations under the Act to date. This is particularly the case through the continued use of Equality Impact Assessments which are prepared and published as part of relevant reports to Councillors when policies or practices are introduced or changed.
- 9.4 The anticipated Codes of Practice relating to the Specific Duties will be published shortly. At the time of writing, we are awaiting further detail behind exactly what 'information' and 'transparency' may be required to demonstrate compliance with the Act. Currently we simply have what it says at 6.3 and 7.1 above. Once these details are published, we will review the situation to see if there any gaps or actions for us to address to be able to demonstrate that we are meeting our legal obligations including the setting of equality objectives.

10. 2011 update

- 10.1 The Council's three internal equality groups – the Member Liaison Group, the Diversity Steering Group and the Equality and Diversity Reference Group – have continued to meet in connection with items under the terms of reference for their area, and to receive and offer feedback to the other groups as needed.
- 10.2 The Panel will be aware that the post of Equality and Diversity Officer is a shared one between Colchester Borough Homes and Colchester Borough Council. This enables the efficient use of limited resources and the sharing of knowledge, information and experience. The opportunity has been taken to streamline internal processes and documentation to reflect the many changes this year. The recent co-location at Rowan House will help to further develop communication links and joint working where practical and appropriate.
- 10.3 Other activities undertaken in 2011 since the last report to this Panel included:
- Key information about the Equality Act was sent online to staff and councillors via a metadata page on 6 April (when the Equality Act public sector general duty became law).
 - The content of the Council's Equality webpages and intranet were also updated to reflect the Equality Act.
 - A new Equality Impact Assessment form was drafted and published on the Council's intranet to ensure full compliance with the Equality Act public sector general duty. The opportunity was also taken to produce a shorter, more user-friendly document.
 - All Equality Impact Assessments are published on the website, and all public reports include consideration of equality, diversity and human rights.
 - Equality and Diversity induction training has been brought in line with the general duty.
 - Equality monitoring data on staff has been broadened to include all 'protected characteristics', and opportunities are being taken to make this as complete as possible.
 - Our Research and Engagement Team has also updated the Council's equality monitoring processes to take full account of the 'protected characteristics'. The Census work will also offer invaluable equality monitoring data about the borough's population.
 - It has been a busy period for policy changes at national level. The Council has considered the consultation on the Reform of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and responded to Government consultations on the Policy Review Paper, Banning Age Discrimination and Access to Elected Office for Disabled People. We were one of only eight councils to respond to this last consultation and the Government Equalities Office said, "Your comments were invaluable in helping to inform the future direction of this work programme."
 - We have tried, within limited resources, to support and promote activities and events organised by community organisations which help to "foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who don't". These include Essex Pride in September, Colchester Black History Month in October and Inter-faith Week at the Town Hall in November.

11. Strategic Plan References

11.1 The vision set out in the Council's Strategic Plan 2009-12 is "Colchester: a place where people want to live, work and visit." The Strategic Plan makes a strong commitment to ensuring that all borough residents can expect a good quality of life, backed by a commitment to tackle discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

11.2 The Strategic Plan is also underpinned by the Council's statement on access and participation, which states that:

"We are committed to promoting equity and equal opportunities for access and participation for everyone, whatever their personal circumstances. This includes the use of all the services and facilities which we provide. We are committed to ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and to eliminating all forms of harassment.

We will allocate and spend money on services as fairly as possible according to the needs of local people."

11.3 The Strategic Plan 2012-15 will continue to reflect the importance of Equality and Diversity in our fast-growing borough.

12. Consultation

12.1 The Single Equality Scheme was formally adopted by the Council following a six-week consultation period. The action plan has been updated by members of the Council's Diversity Steering Group, which has a representative for each service area. They were asked to consult with their service areas and report progress to date.

13. Publicity Considerations

13.1 The Council's website has a section on Equality and Diversity where all related documents are published, with an opportunity provided for feedback and comments. This section has been updated to reflect the Equality Act 2010.

14. Financial Implications

14.1 The economic climate has had an impact, with the withdrawal of some funding streams and a reduction in budgets available to the Council. This has the potential to impact on service provision. The completion of Equality Impact Assessments is an important part of ensuring that consideration of the need to advance equality forms an integral part of the decision-making process when addressing how to make changes to policies and practices, especially in relation to difficult budget decisions. The duty must be exercised in such a way that it influences the final decision. The Council's Equality Impact Assessment Form has been updated to reflect the Equality Act and the protected characteristics, and the opportunity was also taken to simplify its format and layout.

14.2 A number of 'best practice' networks and officer posts have ceased across the eastern region as a result of changes to funding or priorities. We had previously tapped into the knowledge and expertise of these networks to help us make the most of our Equality and Diversity resources, for partnership working, and to access policy-related updates and economic sources of training.

14.3 Please also see 'risk management implications' at 18 below, especially "Legal cases brought on grounds of discrimination do not have upper limits like those brought through employment tribunals, so it imperative that the Council meets its responsibilities to ensure it does not discriminate in order to avoid the potential for significant financial claims".

15. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

15.1 This report is an annual update about Equality and Diversity, and the Council's responsibilities in this area.

15.2 The Equality Impact Assessment for the Council's Single Equality Scheme is available by clicking [here](#), or on the Council's website by following this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy>Policies, Strategies and Performance>Diversity and Equality>Equality Impact Assessments>Corporate Management.

16. Community Safety Implications

16.1 Funding and staffing at local, regional and national level have also seen significant changes in 2011. The potential impact on Equality and Diversity aspects of Community Safety, such as Hate Crime, need to be borne in mind as part of the decision-making process when developing policy and delivering services.

16.2 As shown at 6.2 above, the Equality Act states that "All councils, including their councillors and staff, must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act."

17. Health and Safety Implications

17.1 There are no specific Health and Safety Implications to this report.

18. Risk Management Implications

18.1 As an employer and provider of public services, the Council could face legal challenges from individuals or groups who have been unlawfully discriminated against, however unintended. Making sure that Equality Impact Assessments are prepared, published and considered as part of the decision-making process does reduce this risk significantly.

18.2 Legal cases brought on grounds of discrimination do not have upper limits like those brought through employment tribunals, so it imperative that the Council meets its responsibilities to ensure it does not discriminate in order to avoid the potential for significant financial claims.

18.3 There are risks to the Council's reputation and profile if the organisation does not demonstrate that it has understood and met its responsibilities under the equalities legislation currently in place.

Appendix A - Single Equality Scheme Action Plan

Equality objectives and three-year action plan 2010-2013 - update of progress against actions as at October 2011.

NB All actions cover all equality groups unless otherwise stated.

Equality Objective 1: Ensure our plans and policies enhance the services delivered to our diverse communities

Action	Desired Outcome	Progress to October 2011
<p>Ensure Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are carried out on all appropriate new, or amended existing, policies, strategies, services and functions.</p>	<p>To ensure all new, or amended existing, policies, strategies, services and functions are assessed for potential impacts on all equality groups.</p>	<p>All service areas have made progress and continue to update the Corporate EqIA timetable. More than 90% of EqIAs are up to date and published on the Council's website. (The rest are being reviewed in line with scheduled updates.)</p>
<p>Implement an EqIA awareness programme for all service managers and appropriate staff on our new EqIA Toolkit.</p>	<p>To ensure all relevant staff are aware of EqIAs and that they are confident in carrying them out.</p>	<p>The EqIA form was updated, distributed and published on the Hub in April 2011 to take account of the Equality Act 2010. Frequently Asked Questions were also published in June 2011. Briefings have been given by the Equality and Diversity Officer to the Diversity Steering Group and the Diversity Reference Group.</p>
<p>Review group service plan.</p>	<p>To ensure all group service plans consider equality and diversity implications and responsibilities and identify any areas for improvement and equality objectives for their service area.</p>	<p>Reference to equality and diversity responsibilities are included within Service Plans which are monitored and reviewed regularly by the service concerned.</p> <p>Street Services – All actions in the Fundamental Service Review (FSR) Full Business Case were equality impact assessed and each subsequent service improvement is assessed separately as part of implementation. A new service plan will be produced for 2012/13.</p> <p>Corporate Management – This includes broader responsibilities such as: HR Equality and Diversity data monitoring and recruitment processes; the Equality and Diversity role which includes corporate co-ordination, policy and resource; Democratic Services check services have included and published EqIAs before reports are presented to councillors.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	Progress to October 2011
<p>Promote equality and diversity policies to the Council's contractors and consultants appointed on land and property contracts and building works, as required by the Equality Bill (now the Equality Act 2010).</p>	<p>To ensure the Council's contractors and consultants are aware of their equality and diversity responsibilities.</p>	<p>The Council employs framework consultants for all construction-based consultancy work. The framework consultants are currently NPS Ltd which has a well-developed Equality and Diversity policy that was assessed within the OJEU scoring and tender process.</p> <p>NPS Ltd tender all building works on behalf of the Council. All tender documents are based upon the JCT form of contract which includes Equality and Diversity clauses. Contractors are also made aware of the Council's Equality and Diversity policy as part of the tender documents and contractors have to declare their own Equality and Diversity policies.</p> <p>Similarly, external consultants employed for valuation and estate management services are made aware of the Council's Equality and Diversity policy and requested to provide details of their own RICS-compliant policies in this area.</p> <p>Resource Management – Done and ongoing.</p>
<p>Promote Equality and Diversity through Council procurement process and Strategy, to include written procedures for actions to be taken by Council if equality and diversity requirements breached.</p>	<p>To ensure the Council's contractors and consultants are aware of their equality and diversity responsibilities. In addition, to ensure the Council meets its legal requirements.</p>	<p>Resource Management – Done and ongoing.</p>
<p>Services to refer to and use the Customer Access and Channel Management Strategy, which has been designed to provide all customers with equal opportunity to access our services, and which is adopted across the organisation as best practice in order to improve customer access for all.</p>	<p>To ensure all customers can access our services using a variety of methods.</p>	<p>FSRs have this as a core component of how service provision is redesigned as part of improving services for customers. The Strategy helps to inform service design and is supported by work undertaken by the Council's Research and Engagement Team.</p> <p>Street Services – This is being done as part of the implementation of Street Services' FSR in 2010/11. Previous FSRs such as that for 'Revenues and Benefits' and Housing have used the Strategy to offer all customers a range of ways to contact the Council and access its services. Customer Service Centre (CSC) – Being done on all correspondence which comes via the CSC.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	Progress to October 2011
Continue to implement the requirement that all Cultural Services delivery partners must have an Equality and Diversity action plan that covers all areas of their operation in place to qualify for the Council's support and review and report performance against these plans at least annually.	To ensure that the Council's delivery partnerships are in line with its equality targets and requirements	Strategic Policy and Regeneration – Requirements have been implemented by delivery partners.

Equality Objective 2: To improve the ways we engage with the borough's diverse communities to ensure that services meet specific needs

Action	Desired Outcome	
Use the SOS bus and other methods to meet the variety of people and groups in our community. Examples include using the SOS bus to offer advice and support to local people at various locations in the borough as part of the Council's 'tackling the credit crunch' initiative.	To engage with our communities and services users, across all equality groups.	<p>Services support where necessary and as opportunities arise. Examples include:</p> <p>Strategic Policy and Regeneration – Officers provide support and assistance in events as and where necessary. Public exhibitions (Town Centre, November 2010) and community engagement events (North Colchester, July 2011) have been held by various teams including Regeneration and Spatial Policy.</p> <p>Life Opportunities – We have worked with secondees from Job Centre Plus to organise options fairs and setting up Work Clubs.</p> <p>Corporate Management – Events in the Town Hall have broadened to include a wider range of community groups (for example over 60s Tea Dances, and the Inter-Faith Week).</p> <p>CSC – Supported where the need is identified for CSC involvement.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Through the Customer Insight group we will bring representatives from across the Council together to coordinate our research and engagement activities and use the results to gain a deeper understanding of our customers service needs.</p>	<p>To coordinate our research and engagement activities and use the results to gain a deeper understanding of our customers service needs.</p>	<p>Strategic Policy and Regeneration – Ongoing activities include Snap and Mosaic user frameworks which have enabled and trained 71 Mosaic users and 25 Snap users across the Council which is increasing research and engagement capacity.</p>
<p>Continue to measure our ethnic minority and migrant worker populations alongside the changing demographics of the Colchester borough.</p>	<p>To gain a better understanding of the communities we serve.</p>	<p>Strategic Policy and Regeneration - 2011 Census outputs to be released in the summer of 2012 which will include full reports and details on the population of the borough.</p>
<p>Work with partners, stakeholders, voluntary sector and community groups to engage with the borough's faith groups to find out if there are any barriers stopping people of any faith from accessing council services, and if so what we can do to help them access our services.</p>	<p>To identify opportunities for people of any faith to fully engage in and access council services.</p>	<p>The Equality and Diversity Officer has engaged with the University of Essex Islamic Society and the Council has been offered awareness training for staff and councillors.</p> <p>The Officer has encouraged all staff to update 'My View', which is the basis of staff equality monitoring data, and this has helped us to collect data on 'religion and belief', being a necessary step towards Equality Act 'general duty' compliance.</p>
<p>Work with partners, stakeholders, voluntary sector and community groups to engage with the borough's disabled community to find out if there are any barriers stopping people with disabilities from accessing council services, and if so what we can do to help them access our services.</p>	<p>To identify opportunities for people with disabilities to fully engage in and access council services.</p>	<p>Colchester Borough Homes has an Equality Focus Group made up of tenants and leaseholders which helps to inform policies and processes. Disability issues are well represented on this group.</p> <p>Officers from services attend a number of these meetings where relevant or in relation to specific concerns, and the Equality and Diversity Officer receives agendas and minutes.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Work with partners, stakeholders, voluntary sector and community groups to engage with the borough's lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities to find out if there are any barriers stopping lesbian, gay or bisexual people from accessing council services, and if so what we can do to help them access our services.</p>	<p>To identify opportunities for lesbian, gay, or bisexual people to fully engage in and access council services.</p>	<p>The Equality and Diversity Officer has established and maintained regular contact with Essex Pride, a community-based organisation which seeks to represent the views of, and further the interests of, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in Colchester and beyond. Both Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Borough Homes were sponsors of the Essex Pride event in Chelmsford in September 2011.</p> <p>The Officer has encouraged all staff to update 'My View', which is the basis of staff equality monitoring data, and this has helped us to collect data on 'sexual orientation', being a necessary step towards Equality Act 'general duty' compliance.</p>
<p>Work with partners, stakeholders, voluntary sector and community groups to engage with the borough's transgender community to find out if there are any barriers stopping transgender people from accessing council services, and if so what we can do to help them access our services.</p>	<p>To identify opportunities for transgender people to fully engage in and access council services.</p>	<p>The Equality and Diversity Officer has engaged with a representative of the Essex transgender community in order to learn more about local issues, Hate Crime and barriers to accessing services. This individual has worked with local Braintree Police, and has kindly offered to work with the Council.</p> <p>The Council works with police and other partners to identify repeat and vulnerable callers reporting anti-social behaviour and to tackle underlying causes.</p>
<p>Work with partners, stakeholders, voluntary sector and community groups to find out if there are any women or men's group running in the borough; and if so to engage with them to find out if there are any barriers stopping individuals from accessing council services, and if so what we can do to help them access our services.</p>	<p>To identify opportunities for women and men to fully engage in and access council services.</p>	<p>The Equality and Diversity Officer has engaged with 'For Women', a support service run by Colchester and Tendring's Women's Refuge, which provides a safe and secure environment for women experiencing domestic violence and is awaiting feedback on questions raised.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Work with partners, stakeholders, voluntary sector and community groups to engage with the borough's young and older people to find out if there are any barriers stopping them from accessing council services, and if so what we can do to help them access our services.</p>	<p>To identify opportunities for young and older people to fully engage in and access council services.</p>	<p>The Council's Research and Engagement Team has conducted consultation work and provided current data about the percentage of young and older people in the borough.</p> <p>EqlAs are prepared for changes to policies and service provision, and this includes consultation with these groups.</p> <p>Addressing the needs of older and younger people is key to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan. The detailed actions and progress towards achieving these two priorities are shown in the Action Plan which is reported to councillors each year and published on the Strategic Plan section of the Council's website.</p>
<p>To analyse results of engagement with the borough's equality groups and suggest how we can make improvements to service delivery to ensure that our services are accessible to all of our communities</p>	<p>To ensure that results of engagement are used to improve access to services for all our communities.</p>	<p>All results from engagement with the borough's equality groups are published on the Council's website. The Equality and Diversity staff and councillor groups also consider this as part of their regular meetings.</p>
<p>Implement the Community and Engagement Participation Strategy across the organisation.</p>	<p>To implement and embed this policy across the organisation so all service areas use the same strategy and are consistent in their approach to engagement and participation.</p>	<p>The Community and Engagement Participation Strategy has been introduced across the Council to ensure that the approach to engagement is consistent in its approach and is evaluated upon completion.</p>
<p>Develop and implement a protocol to standardise survey design across the organisation.</p>	<p>To standardise survey design across the organisation.</p>	<p>The Research and Engagement Team is leading on the introduction of SNAP Surveys across the organisation for all surveys and consultations that are undertaken across the organisation.</p>
<p>Continue to work with the Customer Service Centre focus group.</p>	<p>To gain feedback from customers.</p>	<p>Resource Management – Focus groups have and will continue as planned.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	Resource Management
Implement e-claim to widen choices for claiming benefits including consultation with focus group.	To widen choices for customers to claim benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Done • Now fully available.
Ongoing claim take-up campaigns (working with Welfare Rights) and Money Market Day (working with other agencies) to raise awareness – (both) aimed at all sections of our community.	To raise customer awareness of help available with benefits.	<p>Resource Management – Ongoing. This year's Money Market attracted about 1,500 people from across the community, meeting representatives from 25 local organisations.</p> <p>Details of government benefit changes have been widely publicised, and individual letters sent to those claimants particularly affected.</p>
Build on the effectiveness of Neighbourhood Action Panels to help identify priorities for action in different geographic communities.	To identify priorities for action in different geographic communities.	Neighbourhood Action Panels have been in a period of transition during 2011, with changes to their priorities and resourcing. A review has been conducted, and the Zone Managers in Street Services will now take on the role of representing the Council at these Panels.
Identify new approaches to engage young people in the provision of new play and recreation facilities.	To engage with young people using alternative methods of communication.	Life Opportunities - We have trialled social media such as facebook and twitter as an alternative means of attracting interest from potential users of play areas, along with more traditional approaches such as questionnaires and direct engagement with schools. We carried out a website vote for Castle Park play area which was very successful.
Check ethnic breakdown of Community Alarm clients and compare to ethnicity population data. If above action shows less service usage from particular ethnic groups then target groups for appropriate promotional activities.	To analyse take up of community alarm service by equality groups. To promote service to underrepresented groups.	Street Services - The ethnic breakdown of the clients of this service matches the borough average in the target age groups. A new marketing campaign is about to commence to promote the service, and there will be a focus on ensuring that this is delivered in an inclusive manner.

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Review how Community Alarm services are provided for people who do not have English as a first language. Develop contact with representative groups of ethnic minorities in Colchester to gain an understanding of the needs of various groups. Work with individuals who apply for the Community Alarm service and ensure that information is obtained on the most appropriate communication method.</p>	<p>To ensure service is fully accessible to those people who do not have English as their first language.</p>	<p>Street Services - Language requirements are held as part of the service's key client records. This has been confirmed as essential following contact with representatives of ethnic minority groups in Colchester. The client record also records any cultural needs particularly if visits cannot be made by a certain gender alone.</p>
<p>Review how recycling and waste services are provided for people who do not have English as a first language. Develop contact with representative groups of ethnic minorities in Colchester to gain an understanding of the needs of various groups. Work with individuals who seek information and guidance on recycling and waste minimisation and ensure that information is provided to them appropriately in relation to their needs.</p>	<p>To ensure service is fully accessible to those people who do not have English as their first language.</p>	<p>Street Services - All information provided to people is offered to be translated or interpreted in the most appropriate method possible.</p> <p>Representatives of ethnic minority groups have confirmed that this is the most appropriate approach, but have asked that they are made aware of any issues faced by the Recycling service when introducing new services.</p> <p>The FSR is introducing Zone working with staff "walking their patch" and getting to know the communities and individuals in their Zone. This personal contact will help improve service delivery and mutual understanding. Following the FSR, Strategy and Performance Officers are now in post, and they will develop a behavioural change strategy using Mosaic data to identify the most appropriate ways to engage with our residents, businesses, schools and communities.</p>
<p>Continue to implement additional ways of offering advice and help for customers who contact the Council either by visiting, phoning or using the online facilities.</p>	<p>To ensure customers have a variety of methods to contact the Council.</p>	<p>CSC – There is a new customer strategy which looks to expand face-to-face services to areas of need. This is in addition to all services being accessible via the phone and an ongoing programme of online service development via the website.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	
Continue to develop the advocacy service that the CSC offers which is designed to meet the needs of the individuals, in the whole community, which may be very specific to their circumstances.	That individuals needs specific to their circumstances are met through the provision of an advocacy service.	The CSC offers an advocacy service to the most vulnerable of customers which is a one-to-one service specifically tailored to the needs of the individual.
Continue to develop relationships with partners such as the County Council, Police, Fire and Rescue and PCT to implement their services within the main council public office in order for them to reach the wider community.	To continue to develop relationships with partners listed to improve services for customers. The provision of a broad range of services which is accessible to customers in one central location.	The public office in the CSC is offered to partner organisations for their use to provide wider services of residents of the borough in one place. Essex County Council is in the CSC for two days a week, and customers use their services regularly. NHS, Police and Fire and Rescue run more of a surgery-type session once a month.
Continue to work with all the borough libraries and town and parish councils as community outposts for providing Colchester Borough Council services, advice and help including online facilities.	To continue to develop relationships with partners listed to improve services for customers. All borough libraries and parish councils are community outposts for Colchester Borough Council services and can provide customers with help, advice and access to online information.	The CSC continues to work with the seven libraries in the Borough, and the next phase of development is to train library staff in iConnect self-service, so that their staff can further assist customers in accessing Council services via the libraries' public access PCs.
Continue to implement the requirement for Cultural Services delivery partners to have audience development and engagement plans in place, and review their activity annually.	To ensure that we meet the needs of the diverse community, and do so more effectively through delivery partnerships	Strategic Policy and Regeneration – Requirement partially met as not all review meetings have been completed.

Equality Objective 3: Identify and consult groups using a variety of communication methods to ensure equal accessibility to services for all

Action	Desired Outcome	
Annual benefits survey in conjunction with benchmarking group and neighbouring councils.	To measure how the Council compare to others in benchmarking group.	Resource Management – Done in 2009. Next due Winter 2011 to follow introduction of e-claim, to check effectiveness and user perception.
Review database to identify people in need (for example direct debit failures, indicating people affected by credit crunch) as possible targets for benefits take-up campaigns.	To help those people identified as requiring assistance with payments.	Resource Management – Done in 2010. New exercise to start shortly working with welfare rights team, to contact people whose income is less than their applicable amount, to advise extra benefits they may be entitled to.
Develop use of Mosaic customer profiles to identify target groups for promotional activities (such as benefits take-up, promoting direct debit).	To use data from Mosaic customer profiles to help customers identified as needing assistance.	Resource Management – Done.
Results of our survey of users of our benefits and taxation services as part of fundamental review to be analysed. From the analysis, we will be able to identify if there are any actions we need to take to amend or shape future service delivery.	To consult and involve local people in shaping our future service delivery.	Resource Management – Done (featured in business plan presented to councillors).

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Ensure that a full range of methods are used to communicate with customers and that consideration is given to those who have a visual or hearing impairment, those with low levels of literacy and those who do not have English as their first language.</p>	<p>To ensure all people are considered when we communicate with our customers and the wider communities.</p>	<p>All published documents are available in alternative formats and languages upon request. Some specific examples include:</p> <p>Street Services - Individual customer needs are recorded and information produced automatically for them if new services are introduced or new information is made available.</p> <p>Resource Management – Braille and CDs supplied routinely. Leaflets and forms meet Plain Language Standard (national accreditation).</p> <p>Life Opportunities – We have organised several consultation events this year tailored to the needs of older or disabled people.</p> <p>Corporate Management – Trial of new audio equipment in use at the Town Hall for future improvements. Recruitment information on website can be converted into different languages. Access to Work and Occupational Health are used where disabled employees require reasonable adjustments in the workplace.</p> <p>Skills Audit undertaken of all staff to identify needs and free basic skills and NVQ training offered to those highlighted as having a need or not having had the opportunity to undertake in the past.</p>
<p>Continue to develop relationships with educational establishments such as Colchester Institute to improve knowledge of methods of accessing council services.</p>	<p>To improve knowledge of methods of accessing Council services.</p>	<p>The Council worked with the University of Essex to trial different methods of approaching this issue.</p>
<p>Food hygiene training courses to be held in Bengali and Chinese (annually) and in Turkish / other languages (as required).</p>	<p>To ensure food hygiene is accessible to those people who do not have English as their first language.</p>	<p>Successfully ran a Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Chinese in May 2011, and all 17 attendees passed. No take up on Bengali, Hindu and Gujarati so these were cancelled. No requests for other languages.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Survey of users of our benefits and taxation services as part of a fundamental service review.</p> <p>Use results of survey to shape future service delivery.</p>	<p>To consult and involve local people in shaping our future service delivery.</p>	<p>Resource Management – Done (as part of FSR research, reported to councillors). Results, particularly using Customer Insight surveys, showed customer priorities were to pay benefits and inform them of progress quickly. This led to the introduction of e-claims, the use of risk-based verification (to simplify process) and phone calls for information (instead of request letters).</p>
<p>To promote and signpost people to help available to them, for example ESOL classes being run in the borough for those who do not have English as their first language.</p>	<p>To ensure we promote initiatives and help that are available</p>	<p>Life Opportunities - Good progress being made signposting such courses.</p>

Equality Objective 4: Ensure staff and members understand their equality and diversity duties to promote equal opportunities and deliver customer excellence

Action	Desired Outcome	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EQIA for recruitment and selection to ensure strategy and practice is aligned to equality and diversity policy and reflects best practice. Promote recruitment and selection training for officers and Members involved in such activities. 	<p>To ensure the Councils recruitment process is up to date and that staff involved in selection panels are trained.</p>	<p>An updated EQIA for Recruitment, Retention and Turnover has been produced and extensively covers all protected characteristics. This has been used in recruitment following FSRs.</p> <p>The Equality and Diversity in Employment policy is in the process of being updated. The recruitment and selection course for officers continues to be run periodically. Councillors are involved in senior recruitment processes and are provided with a detailed brief as and when required.</p>
<p>To ensure that all staff receive equality and diversity training on all equality strands, and that training includes promotion of the council's equality and diversity policies, to ensure they are communicated, understood and mainstreamed into CBC.</p>	<p>To ensure all new and existing staff receive regular equality and diversity training.</p>	<p>Equality and Diversity training available to all new recruits, an in-house programme having been developed. Awareness for councillors delivered, and all officers and councillors have received an e-update on the new Act and duties. A recommendation has been made regarding general communications with employees about equality and diversity issues and the importance of equal opportunities monitoring.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new staff to receive an induction into Equality and Diversity and their responsibilities Refresher programme for staff who have not received recent training The Council's new e-learning programme will be used to provide ongoing and refresher training in equality and diversity and cultural awareness 		<p>This training is ongoing, with all staff encouraged to attend relevant training courses as and where appropriate.</p> <p>Life Opportunities – Staff are being directed towards appropriate training through their Personal Development Plans.</p>
<p>All services to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities under equalities legislation and apply them in their work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather data on awareness training attended by staff Identify gaps and training needs within PDP <p>Organise relevant training and information sessions for staff as required.</p>	<p>To ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities under equalities legislation and apply them in their work.</p>	<p>The Personal Development Plan process is not currently being fully utilised across the organisation, but where this practice is in place needs are identified and addressed. Learning and Development activities for staff and councillors have been delivered, and an e-awareness update delivered to all staff in 2011 on the new Act and duties.</p> <p>The collation and monitoring of training data has been added to Human Resources' Diversity Action Plan.</p> <p>All staff are encouraged to attend relevant training courses as and where appropriate.</p>
<p>Collate, monitor and publish employment equality data for recruitment, staff retention and workforce profiles for each equality strand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collate and analyse workforce data. Collate and monitor data on 	<p>To analyse employment data by equality groups to identify if workforce reflects local communities. If there are any underrepresented groups, identify actions to increase employment.</p>	<p>Human Resources produce quarterly workforce data for the Senior Management Team. Diversity information about the existing workforce and recruitment process is collated, analysed and published on the Council's website on an annual basis. This report has recently been revised to reflect the public sector duty requirements of the Equality Act. This information will also be brought to the attention of the Diversity Steering Group as and when required.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>People segment of the report to the Performance Management Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data to identify and implement actions as part of review of recruitment to address areas of under representation. Identify any barriers to accessibility and participation, in relation to employment. 		<p>Human Resources has also recently updated its Diversity Action Plan to reflect any specific actions needed to ensure that our staff policies and procedures are in line with the Equality Act and the detailed codes of practice as and when these are issued nationally.</p> <p>The EqIA for Recruitment, Retention and Turnover also detailed where action has been taken or is required and this has been published on the Council’s website.</p>
<p>Members to be offered equality and diversity training, on indication and as identified within their personal development plan, and that the training covers all equality strands.</p> <p>Committee Chairs and Cabinet to have Equality and Diversity training as part of the induction to these roles.</p>	<p>To ensure that Members are aware of their statutory responsibilities and that they have the skills to deal with equality issues in their role as elected representatives and champions of their communities.</p>	<p>An update on the revised statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 was delivered to councillors using a “metadata” page.</p> <p>A training session was provided in July 2011 and the member development group has equality and diversity as a core component of its programme.</p> <p>The Equality and Diversity Officer has provided briefing notes to the portfolio holder, the shadow portfolio holder and the Member Liaison Group.</p>
<p>Evaluate the existing delivery of corporate equality and diversity training, ensuring that issues of equality within service delivery and employment are being effectively addressed</p>	<p>A report focusing on the results, conclusions and recommendations of this review will be produced to determine how equality and diversity training should be delivered using blended learning in the future.</p>	<p>In-house Equality and Diversity training has been made available to all new recruits. Awareness for councillors delivered, and all officers and councillors have received an e-update on the new Act and duties. A recommendation has been made regarding general communications with employees about equality and diversity issues and the importance of equal opportunities monitoring.</p> <p>This training is ongoing, with all staff encouraged to attend relevant training courses as and where appropriate. E-learning will be revisited following the introduction of a new supplier.</p>

Equality Objective 5: We will encourage the development of ways of working that take into consideration the flexibility needs of everyone

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Promote and encourage wider flexible working practices across the Council (where such systems are operationally possible and covered by specific legislation) and monitor these requests to ensure the process is free from discrimination.</p>	<p>A flexible and motivated workforce that provides services in accordance with business needs and efficiency requirements</p>	<p>A number of flexible working practices are now in place including home working, flexitime, condensed hours, sabbaticals, extended leave periods, career breaks and shift work. Many office-based staff now do some home-working depending on the needs of their role, and we are monitoring the effectiveness of this.</p> <p>Working patterns are monitored regularly to ensure the needs of the service are balanced with staff desire to work flexibly. There is evidence that working flexibly can enable staff to be more responsive to customers. One of the priorities of FSRs is to make services accessible and available when customers need them.</p>

Equality Objective 6: We will assess how employee and customer data already held by the Council can be more effectively utilised when developing strategies for improved service delivery

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Maximise the use of information collected across the Council on customer demographics and feed this information into the development of future service delivery.</p>	<p>A better understanding of our customers' needs will result in improved service delivery and customer satisfaction</p>	<p>The Research and Engagement Team has worked with services to help them make the best use of available data when planning and implementing future service delivery.</p> <p>Including this in FSRs has led to the following examples: the move towards more online service provision; the Benefits and Revenues e-claim; the increased use of the CSC for customer facing services; improved processes in some service areas to ensure a one-stop approach for customers; and the move to a Zone approach in Street Services.</p>

Equality Objective 7: We will identify any gaps in the employee and customer data we have and devise appropriate methods to obtain this information where it could be of benefit to the service and/or employee

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Develop methods of collecting informative and localised equality monitoring data, including using the Mosaic system for data collection across the equality strands, and put in place a process for analysing the data and intelligence, so that it can be used to improve service delivery within the Colchester borough.</p>	<p>Service provision and workforce practices can develop within a framework that promotes equality</p>	<p>Examples across the Council include:</p> <p>Street Services - Information from Mosaic has been used to better target communications for the Zone teams; marketing for the Helpline service and in the introduction of new services across the Group.</p> <p>Strategic Policy and Regeneration – Information from Mosaic is becoming more important and will continue to be used across the service.</p> <p>Resource Management – Data monitoring opportunities are limited, particularly for benefits to maintain neutrality.</p> <p>Life Opportunities – Information from Mosaic is being used to tailor communication such as our work on worklessness and our consultations.</p> <p>Corporate Management – Human Resources is collecting staff data through My View and other employee processes to minimise the percentage where employee equality information is not known/completed.</p> <p>CSC – We have developed our skills in this area by working with the Research and Engagement Team to use the corporate systems Snap and Mosaic. We make sure that information collected is informative and localised for Equality monitoring.</p>

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Enhance current procedures around sharing data with the Local Strategic Partnership and other stakeholders to ensure a two-way process.</p>	<p>To ensure that we work with others to share information and best practice on our customers and communities.</p>	<p>Please note that the Local Strategic Partnership is not currently operating in the same format or with the same resources as when this Action Plan was initially published.</p> <p>Services such as Street Services, Resource Management (Liaison meetings with stakeholders, agencies, the Customer Focus Group) and the CSC (regular liaison meetings with partner organisations and voluntary groups) all continue to develop data sharing with partners.</p>
<p>To ensure a consistency of information that is collected and monitored across services and the council.</p>	<p>To ensure there is a consistency of equality monitoring data across services and the council.</p>	<p>Services are using a consistent “template” for monitoring information which includes the protected characteristics under the Equality Act. The Research and Engagement Team work with services to encourage consistency and address any queries. Services which hold the Customer Excellence Standard have been externally accredited as part of the Standard’s criteria.</p> <p>Equality and monitoring data about staff has also been updated to reflect the protected characteristics. Staff have been asked to update their information, and an action plan is being developed to help achieve this.</p> <p>Our Equality and Diversity information about councillors is more limited.</p>

Equality Objective 8: We will challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviour and take formal action where necessary

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>Ensure cases of bullying or harassment in the workplace are not tolerated by the Council, apply the disciplinary and grievance procedures and monitor data where necessary</p>	<p>Provision of a workplace that is free from discrimination and harassment on any or no grounds</p>	<p>Processes are in place and cases dealt with in a consistent way and in line with guidance and law. The overall process is overseen by Human Resources.</p> <p>Overall number of cases are monitored and fed through to Senior Management Team quarterly and annually.</p> <p>The Council's Bullying and Harassment policy is currently being updated and this progress has also been reflected in the new version of the Wellbeing in the Workplace Strategy.</p>
<p>Ensure that staff working with external partners, stakeholders, voluntary or community groups or customers are not subject to bullying or harassment on any grounds.</p>	<p>To ensure staff are not are subject to bullying or harassment by external partners, stakeholders, voluntary or community groups or customers.</p>	<p>Processes are in place that provide all staff with clear guidance in all cases. Resources and experienced Human Resources staff are available to support staff. The Council's Health and Safety Advisor is currently producing updated employee guidance on violence and aggression in the workplace.</p>

Equality Objective 9: We will work in partnership to enable people to actively participate in their community

Action	Desired Outcome	
<p>We will work closely with our partners and stakeholders to enable people to actively participate in their community. For example, working with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), Essex Police, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.</p>	<p>To ensure people can actively participate in their community by working with others to share, knowledge, information and best practice.</p>	<p>Community Development is key to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan. The detailed actions and progress towards achieving this priority is shown in the Action Plan which is reported to councillors each year and published on the Strategic Plan section of the Council's website.</p> <p>Approximately £250,000 investment agreed and awarded to voluntary agencies helping us achieve our strategic priorities. Agreements in place and performance monitoring underway.</p> <p>Opportunities are taken wherever possible. Examples include:</p> <p>Resource Management – Regular liaison meetings with stakeholders and agencies, including the Customer Focus Group which is involved in service planning. The service holds Customer Road Shows and Information briefings.</p> <p>Street Services - This was one of the key priorities in the FSR, particularly the move to Zone working where a key component was community engagement and involvement.</p> <p>Life Opportunities – The Community Garden at Old Heath and the Big Garden have engaged volunteers. A community partner has been found for the ex-MOD gymnasium, and support continues for the community group who will manage the Braiswick building.</p> <p>Strategic Policy and Regeneration – In July the service worked with the University of Essex on an engagement and participation project with more than 300 residents of Mile End and North Colchester.</p> <p>CSC – The service meets with partners and voluntary groups. The Police and NHS hold “surgeries” in the CSC for customers.</p>

Equality Objective 10: We will involve people in the changes and improvements we make to policies and service delivery

Action	Desired Outcome	
Publish the results of the consultations.	To ensure those consulted with and the wider community are made aware of findings and recommendations of consultation carried out.	All consultation results are published on the Council's website and made available in a variety of formats on request.
Ensure a consistent approach to feedback to service users following consultation across services	To ensure those consulted with and the wider community are made aware of findings and recommendations of consultation carried out.	<p>All consultation results are published on the Council's website and made available in a variety of formats on request. Examples of feedback include:</p> <p>Strategic Policy and Regeneration – Various methods of consultation have been used and these are always evaluated and then feedback appropriately.</p> <p>Resource Management – Newsletter on website gives details and performance. A newsletter has been sent to landlords.</p> <p>Corporate Management – Where internal surveys or engagement with staff has been carried out, feedback has been consistent and two-way, ensuring all have the ability to participate and respond.</p>
Monitoring and reporting of the Single Equality Scheme actions through agreed consultation method/s. Ensure staff and customers are kept up-to- date with the progress of the action plan	Satisfaction across the authority of progress made under the Scheme. The Scheme and action plan is amended where necessary	This report is the annual update on the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan. It has been discussed at the meetings of the Council's Diversity Steering Group and the Member Liaison Group during the year. It is published on the Council's website as part of an annual update to the Policy Review and Development Panel and on its Equality webpages.

7 November 2011

Report of	Executive Director	Author	Ann Wain
Title	Magistrates' Courts Task and Finish Group // Final Report		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report concerns the work undertaken by the Magistrates' Courts Task and Finish Group and presents the recommendations of the Group to the Panel

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To review the work of the Magistrates' Courts Task and Finish Group and to consider the Group's recommendations as set out in Paragraph 5 below.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 The Policy Review and Development Panel accepted the request to set up a Task and Finish Group to investigate the future of the Magistrates' Courts in the Town Hall and it is for the Panel to consider the outcomes of the Group's work.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 There are a range of alternative options, the details of which are set out below, that have been considered by the Task and Finish Group:
- Do nothing;
 - Disposal of the parts of the building not currently used plus some currently used parts;
 - Operating the Town Hall Business Plan internally on a more commercial basis;
 - Work with a Developer to look at options over time;
 - Sale of the building on a long lease;
 - Sale of the whole building and car park.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Task and Finish Group was established to investigate the future use of the space in the Town Hall building currently occupied by the Magistrates' Courts which was due to be vacated on completion of the purpose built Magistrates' Courts building in Magdalen Street.
- 4.2 The Group formulated a Scoping Document at its first meeting in July 2011 (Appendix A) and, over a number of subsequent meetings, the Group identified and discounted a range of possible alternative uses, including:
- Registrars service;
 - Public Inquiries;
 - Cells (for use by Police as holding areas on Friday/Saturday nights);
 - Base for Police at weekends;
 - Visitor Information Centre (move from current location);

- Education on legal processes (new Magistrates' Court possibly will have this facility).

4.3 During the course of the meetings the Group also gave consideration to the use of the Town Hall in terms of its role as a venue for Council meetings, Civic and Mayoral functions as well as the commercial marketing of the building.

4.4 At its final meeting, the Group considered the broad principles of a range of options which are set out below:

(i) Do nothing

This would leave a cost pressure of around £40k which would have to be found from revenue budgets. It would also leave growing space that is unused. We could find some uses for the Magistrates' Courts such as educational visits, but these are unlikely to produce an income stream. With no changes to the space, its limited use and access as it stands is difficult.

(ii) Look to dispose of parts of the building that are not currently used including the Magistrates' Courts

There are a growing number of spaces that are no longer in use and the Magistrates' Courts will add to that space. It would be possible to go to the market with these defined spaces to see what offers are forthcoming. This could produce a small capital receipt as well as reduce the amount of space that needs to be maintained.

While there may be uses that are less popular, the market will essentially say what it is prepared to deliver. This would be within the constraints of planning criteria and the listed status of the building.

(iii) Consider looking at a larger area to dispose of, retaining the main meetings rooms and Mayoral suite only

This option extends option (ii) to include some of the rooms that are currently used. This could make it more attractive to the market, although until this is tested it is unclear how this might work. This also starts to impact on the Council's use of the building.

(iv) Extend the Town Hall Business Plan in-house

There is an opportunity to try and increase income from the Town Hall. An income is currently produced from the hire of rooms as the Group has seen. This is limited by the Council's use of the building, which produces a number of constraints on when, how and what is hired for. Moving meetings out of the Town Hall to free up the building for more income generation is possible with our other buildings, but these options have to be set against other constraints:

- Rowan House – has only one large meeting room that is suitable for public meetings and is not in the Town Centre so is not as close to public transport. It would need some adjustment to make it more useable and has limited capacity.
- Angel Court – certainly has space that could be adapted for internal, day time meetings. There is an option to adapt space for public meetings but this has to set against options for renting more ground floor space to potential partners. If there was confidence that the Town Hall could generate enough income to match other options for the space, then the ground floor could be adapted to offer a flexible space that would accommodate public meetings. There is a capital sum for the renovation of Angel Court, although this is fairly modest.

Running the building in-house does ensure more flexibility, but would require the further development of relevant skills and also risks putting in so many constraints that it is not possible to build income.

(v) Test expressions of interest to run the Town Hall on a commercial basis

This option has all of the issues of option (iv), but if companies were invited to bid the potential of the building could be assessed. A number of pieces of work would need to be undertaken:

- Scope of what the Council is prepared to hand over and on what terms;
- What sort of agreement the Council would have that would provide an income and how costs for the building would also be set against that;

- Constraints, for example, use of Mayoral suite, leaders office, group rooms
- It is interesting to note that Brentwood have just made a decision to go down this route, moving all meetings out of their Town Hall and using a management company to run the building.

(vi) Work with a Developer to look at options over a period of time

This is a marginally less radical than option (vii) and could provide a way of retaining more control. Some proposals would need to be agreed and this might require a more difficult decision to make this attractive to the market. As with option (ii), changes would have to be in accordance with planning criteria and listed building constraints. The Council would/could retain ownership under this option.

(vii) Sale of the whole building on a long lease

The building could be put up for sale on a long lease for the market to suggest uses. It could be attractive as a hotel for example. This is likely to be unpopular with some sections of the public. It could be sold as a single unit or broken up into part lots.

(viii) Sale of the building plus car park

The Town Hall sits in a prime location and in addition the car park and the “Document Centre” to the rear of the building is in Council ownership. This could be looked at as a whole package. It is likely that at least part of the car park would be needed for a number of the options outlined above.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 Following detailed consideration of the full range of options, the Magistrates’ Court Task and Finish Group invites the Policy Review and Development Panel to consider the following recommendations:

That –

- (i) The external market is tested for expressions of interest to establish what could be possible within a range of conditions;
- (ii) There are two distinct areas to be put out to the market:
 - (a) A range of spaces that are no longer used by the Council plus the space currently occupied by the Magistrates’ Courts for possible long lease and redevelopment,
 - (b) The rest of the building for consideration to be managed by an external company to increase income;
- (iii) The areas identified above at (ii)a and (ii)b could be bid for by separate companies or a single company and this would include bids from community groups;
- (iv) Certain requirements, to address the following aspects, would be applicable in respect of (ii)b above:
 - (a) Reducing the Council’s need for the building by moving internal day time meetings into space in Angel Court and looking at whether some public meetings could be moved out of the Town Hall, potentially using space in Angel Court to meet this requirement;
 - (a) Preserving the Council’s right to use the Town Hall for a range of functions including, but not exclusively, Full Council meetings, Mayoral functions, Open Building Heritage Days, St George’s Day, Oyster Feast, and Remembrance Sunday.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 Certain elements of this work could potentially assist in addressing one of the Council’s three corporate objectives, namely shifting resources to deliver priorities.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation would need to be undertaken to pursue these ideas. There are also likely to be staff affected who would also need to be fully consulted.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 There will be public interest in any changes to the use of the Town Hall.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 Full financial implications have not yet been established. The reason for initiating the review was the relocation of the Magistrates' Courts which will mean a cost pressure of around £40k if we do not find an alternative use for the Courts.
- 9.2 There could be a small capital receipt if parts of the building are let on a long lease and a revenue improvement if more income is derived from the Town Hall.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

- 10.1 Several parts of the Town Hall are no longer in use for Council business due to accessibility issues outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act. It will be necessary to undertake a full Equality Impact Assessment prior to the implementation of any of the proposals identified in Paragraph 5 above.

11. Community Safety Health and Safety or Risk Management Implications


- 11.1 There are no significant Community Safety, Health and Safety or Risk Management implications.

Task and Finish Group Scoping Document

Task & Finish Group Subject	Options for use of Magistrates' Courts
Start Date	7 July 2011
Terms of Reference	
<p>Policy Review and Development Panel has asked for a Task and Finish Group to look at the options for future use of the Magistrates' Courts. There will be residual costs when the Magistrates' Courts are vacated which will create a budget pressure and we need to consider how to mitigate this.</p> <p>The Group will need to take an overview of the use of the Town Hall as the Magistrates' Courts is an integral part of the building and it may not be possible to find a suitable solution without considering the rest of the building</p> <p>The aim of the Group is to put forward a range of options for future use of the space and how they might impact on the rest of the Town Hall. That these options have been put under a level of scrutiny to test their feasibility.</p>	
Specific questions to be answered or concerns to be addressed	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the possible alternative uses for the Magistrates Court space? • What are the possible alternative approaches to managing the Town Hall? • How can we mitigate the budget pressure? • How far do we want to consider a commercial outcome balanced against the perceptions of the Town Hall as a public building? 	
Relevance to the Strategic Plan and Corporate Priorities	
To ensure effective use of our resources to enable us to shift resources to priority areas.	
Key Stakeholders, Partners or other agencies involved	
There could be a range of stakeholders and partners depending on the feasible options/ideas identified. As options are identified, stakeholders/partners will be approached for views. If options include changed use of some or all of the Town Hall, the public will also have a view.	
Evidence and research to be gathered	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gather ideas for the use of the Magistrates' Courts • To follow up these ideas with relevant organisations to ascertain which are feasible • Visit to the Magistrates' Courts and some of the surrounding areas in the Town Hall to understand the space • Information about costs 	
Timescales, Communications and Reporting	
<p>To report back to the Policy Review and Development Panel at the end of September or early October.</p> <p>Portfolio Holder and Cabinet to be informed of early thoughts</p>	

Chairman	Councillor Bill Frame
Members	Councillor Gerard Oxford (Deputy Chairman) Councillor Terry Sutton Councillor Julie Young Councillor Beverly Davis Councillor Henry Spyvee
Lead Officer	Ann Wain

7 November 2011

Report of	Head of Corporate Management	Author	Amanda Chidgey
Title	Work Programme 2011/12		 282227
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report sets out the current Work Programme 2011/2012 for the Policy Review and Development Panel.

1. Decisions Required

- 1.1 The Policy Review and Development Panel is asked to note the current situation regarding the Panel's work programme for 2011/12.
- 1.2 In respect of the Older Person's Task and Finish Group:
 - (i) To consider an interim recommendation in respect of the Council's review of its own sheltered accommodation, that the Policy Review and Development Panel propose to Cabinet that, as part of the overall Housing Revenue Account budget setting process to be considered by Cabinet in January 2012, the capital receipt generated by any disposal be ring-fenced within the Housing Revenue Account to either fund the refurbishment / conversions costs at the four sheltered housing sites identified and not be used to repay Housing Revenue Account debt.
 - (ii) To note the Task and Finish Group's intention to extend its work timetable to early 2012 to enable consultation with older people in Colchester.

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. Introduction

- 3.1 At each meeting of the Panel, the opportunity is taken for the work programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances.

4. Current Situation

- 4.1 The Work Programme has been updated since the meeting of the Panel held on 8 August 2011 to reflect the current circumstances as follows:
 - **Joint Protocol for the Management of Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments** Due to the need to consider the issues raised by the Panel, including the need to conduct consultations and to review the Equality Impact Assessment, it is not anticipated that the revised Joint Protocol for the Management of Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments will be available for consideration again by the Panel until December 2011. This item of business has therefore been scheduled for the meeting of the Panel on 16 January 2012.

- **Economic Development Strategy 2010 - 2015** has now been scheduled for the first meeting of the Panel in the next Municipal Year which will give the Enterprise and Tourism Manager a full year on which to report to the Panel;

4.2 In terms of progress in respect of the Task and Finish Groups:

- **20 mph speed limit:**
A letter has been sent by the Chairman to Essex County Councillor Tracey Chapman inviting her to provide an update on the issue and to attend a meeting of a reconvened Task and Finish Group. A number of reminders have been forwarded to Essex County Council Cabinet Office and a response is awaited;
- **Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal**
Two meetings of the Group were held on 16 August and 14 September 2011. Following consultation with the portfolio holder, the Highwoods Group representation on the Task and Finish Group has been amended from Councillor Philip Oxford to Councillor Beverley Oxford. Given the national uncertainty regarding weekly collections and the commencement of the trial for food waste in November, the Chairman, Councillor Julie Young, has recently proposed that the Group delays meeting again until January 2012 when there should be more clarity.
- **Older Persons' Accommodation**
The Group has met on three occasions and considered issues relating to housing need, demand and current provision; Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Private Sector Stock Condition Survey; national and local policy drivers; key strategic documents of other organisations; Colchester's Housing Strategy. The Group has assembled an evidence base and begun to bring together strategic objectives and actions to deliver these. In addition, the Group is in the process of visiting different models of accommodation for older people in Colchester and neighbouring districts to enhance their knowledge of good practice and different tenure options available for older people.

In considering the recommendations of the review of the Council's sheltered accommodation project along with the responses made by tenants to the consultation exercise, the Task and Finish Group has indicated its concerns about the use of any future capital receipt. The Group members feel strongly that the money should not just be ring-fenced to the HRA but also ring-fenced to the improvement and conversion of sheltered housing and not to repay debt. They explored ways that their concerns could be communicated to Cabinet and are seeking to do so through an interim recommendation of the Group through the Policy Review and Development Panel.

Ensuring that the views of local older people are considered in their final conclusions has been a strong consideration of the Group. Accordingly, the responses of Colchester Borough Council tenants aged 40-50 years regarding their future housing aspirations and the views gathered as part of the sheltered housing review have both been considered. The Groups would also like to consult with those housing applicants aged 40-50 who are not council tenants about their future housing aspirations as well as holding some focus groups with older people where they could gather more qualitative data.

- **The Future of the Magistrates' Courts in the Town Hall**
See separate report on this agenda.

5. Standard References

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

Policy Review and Development Panel
WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

	<u>20 June 2011</u>	<u>8 August 2011</u>	<u>12 September 2011</u>
Policy Initiatives		Colchester Joint Protocol for the Management of Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments	
Review of Corporate Policies	Events Policy for Parks and Open Spaces Debt Management Policy		
Task and Finish Groups		Update on the introduction of 20 mph speed limits in Colchester	

	<u>7 November 2011</u>	<u>16 January 2012</u>	<u>5 March 2012</u>
Policy Initiatives		Colchester Joint Protocol for the Management of Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments	
Review of Corporate Policies	Equality and Diversity - Annual Update report		
Task and Finish Groups	Future of Magistrates' Courts in the Town Hall		Older Persons Accommodation // Final report Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal (update then further report to Panel in November 2012)

Task and Finish Groups	Membership 2011-12
20 mph speed limit	Councillors Cory, Ford, Hardy, and G. Oxford and Parish Councillor Gili-Ross
Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal	Councillors Cope, Cory, Ellis, B. Oxford, Willetts and J Young
Older Persons Accommodation	Councillors Kimberley, Lewis, Lilley, Mudie, B Oxford and L Sykes
Magistrates' Courts in the Town Hall	Councillors Davies, Frame, G Oxford, Spyvee, Sutton and J Young.

2012-13

June 2012: Economic Development Strategy 2010 - 2015

