



## Cabinet

Item  
**8(iii)**

6 September 2023

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Chief Operating Officer</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Simon Thorp simon.thorp@ colchester.gov.uk</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>End of Strategic Plan 2020-23 Performance Report - Delivering Cabinet Vision and Priorities</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards		

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This Report provides details of delivery against the Council's 2020-23 Strategic Plan.
- 1.2 The Plan set out how the Council would address the key challenges facing the borough through five strategic priority themes:
  - Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability
  - Creating safe, healthy and active communities
  - Delivering homes for people who need them
  - Growing a fair economy so everyone benefits
  - Celebrating our heritage and culture
- 1.3 The plan outlined 15 priorities (3 under each strategic theme), considering the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and set out the key goals by which success would be measured, together with a clear set of commitments that would be delivered. These formed the basis for the Strategic Plan Action Plan.
- 1.4 Performance prioritised in the 2020-23 Strategic Plan will remain a focus for the new Strategic Plan 2023-26 (A City fit for the Future) - responding to the climate emergency; delivering modern services for a modern City; improving health, well-being and happiness; delivering homes for those most in need; growing our economy so everyone benefits and celebrating our City, heritage and culture.

### 2. Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 To confirm delivery against the 2020-23 Strategic Plan.

### 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To ensure satisfactory delivery of Cabinet's vision and key priorities.

### 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There are no appropriate alternative options.

## 5. Background Information

5.1 To deliver the Cabinet vision several key priorities were identified. The priorities with key highlights of progress and achievements are shown below.

### 5.2 Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability

<b>Respond to the Climate Emergency</b>	The Council's carbon emissions have been reduced by 10.1% since 2019/20.
	The Council agreed to develop a 17.5 Hectare Solar Park and Microgrid at the Northern Gateway and has completed RIBA stage 1 and 2 feasibility/viability work, now proceeding onto the planning application stage.
<b>Conserve and enhance biodiversity</b>	The Colchester Woodland and Biodiversity Project planted trees in suitable areas and by focusing on the naturalisation of sites, enhanced the biodiversity further, reviewing the management regimes and continuing to communicate changes to our communities.
	'Open Up Our River': by clearing up and cutting back, improving access and walks along the River Colne, with ongoing scheduled maintenance work through Grounds Maintenance Contract.
	'Cherish Our Parks': to improve their condition, with yet more tree and wildflower planting and path improvements, with continued review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract incorporating additional wildflower planting where budget allows and dialogue with key stakeholders on planting approach alongside the continuation of wild verges in Wivenhoe.
<b>Enable more opportunity for walking and cycling around Colchester</b>	The infrastructure for sustainable travel has been boosted through Levelling Up Fund and Town Deal projects included a number of walking and cycling improvements such as the City Centre to Greenstead and University walking and cycling route Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 4, alongside the Fixing the Link and Active Travel Fund 2 projects also progressing in support of the wider LCWIP programme with Essex County Council.

### 5.3 Creating safe, healthy and active communities

<b>Build on community strengths and assets</b>	Embedding Communities Can with system partners and communities including training and awareness, learning from best practice, capacity building and outcomes focus, enabling an Asset Based Community Development Approach.
<b>Tackle the causes of inequality and support our most vulnerable people</b>	Prioritising support for those faced with terrible choices, between food or warmth or other

	essential needs, working with communities and through our community partners to build community wealth. This has included working with partners, strengthening the capacity of the Council's high performing welfare support team, and leveraging resources to provide targeted help for those in extreme difficulty, acknowledging rising demand for help and support for the most vulnerable.
	A Colchester Emergency Fund provided targeted help for those in extreme difficulty, whether with food or warmth or other essential needs, as a supplement to national schemes and other support, working through our community partners
	A Crisis Reaction Service drew on and strengthened our high performing benefits team, acknowledging rising demand, continuing to connect residents to sources of support and to otherwise alleviate hardship, at pace, with partners. This enabled a Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Fund to launch, enabling discretionary support, with remaining funding from the main scheme, of up to £100 to all Council Taxpayers in hardship, with minimal application process.
<b>Provide opportunities for young people.</b>	Through Town Deal funding, commencing work to transform youth facilities in the City Centre (Townhouse youth centre), Stanway and Highwoods.
	Completion of Buffett Way Playground refurbishment (£30k), modernising this play space after years of deprivation, with 'Priority 1' play areas to invest an additional £150k playground funding made available to upgrade play areas that are in desperate need.

#### 5.4 Delivering homes for people who need them

<b>Increase the number, quality, and types of homes.</b>	The Strategic Plan target was to deliver 380 affordable homes (set pre Covid). By year end 2023 the number of homes delivered was 390 homes. During 2022-2023 a total of 172 homes were delivered including 100 with Registered Providers via S106 agreements, 42 via 100 Homes & Acquisitions, 20 Council new build and 10 First Homes (the government's new Home Ownership product).
<b>Prevent households from experiencing homelessness.</b>	During 2022-23, homelessness was prevented for 209 households and 77 households were assisted into accommodation under the relief duty. The

	Rough Sleeper Team provided support and assistance to 137 rough sleepers and accommodated 53, whilst 29 rough sleepers were reconnected.
	Help and support, with community and voluntary groups, to integrate Ukrainian and other refugees into our communities was also provided, increasing work with Refugee Action and Colchester Borough Homes to manage and minimise any homelessness issues; increasing rematching activities as original arrangements end.
<b>Create new communities and adopt a new Local Plan that delivers jobs, homes and the infrastructure to meet the borough's future needs.</b>	A new Local Plan was adopted, which allocates sites for housing, employment and associated infrastructure.

## 5.5 Growing a fair economy so everyone benefits

<b>Enable Economic Recovery from Covid-19 ensuring all residents benefit from growth.</b>	Support and grants have been provided to businesses to support them through the pandemic. As well as providing direct grants, we have worked with partners in North Essex Economic Board to jointly fund business support using Government funding, also providing specialist support to businesses including on cost reduction and decarbonising.
<b>Work with partners to deliver a shared vision for a vibrant town.</b>	Our bid for City Status was successful and we are engaging partners to agree how to capitalise on this.
	Work with Essex County Council and partners to develop a Masterplan for the Town Centre is well underway with strong engagement with partners and stakeholders. We are also working with the Business Improvement District to support businesses through their Leisure Recovery Strategy and on projects such as to install new gateway signage to promote use of local city centre retail.
<b>Create an environment that attracts inward investment to Colchester and help businesses to flourish.</b>	Government approved all our £18.2m Town Deal business cases and so projects are starting delivery work on improved public spaces, easier transport, better digital connection, and new community facilities.
	Our £20m bid to the Government's Levelling Up funding for the Town Centre was successful and so we are carrying out the necessary preparatory work.

## 5.6 Celebrating our heritage and culture

<p><b>Agree and implement a new Cultural Strategy that supports our cultural assets.</b></p>	<p>The Shared Prosperity Fund will support three projects to be delivered by Creative Colchester; business support for the cultural sector and creative industries in Colchester; a new monthly cultural offer in the City Centre bridging the gap between the day and night economies and a project working with local schools to encourage young residents to pursue careers in our local cultural industries.</p>
	<p>Funding has been allocated across 29 projects under Year 2 of the Cultural and Creative Events Fund as per the recommendation in the Cultural Strategy to provide micro grants to arts, cultural and heritage activity.</p>
<p><b>Strengthen Colchester’s tourism sector and welcome more visitors each year</b></p>	<p>To help build back awareness of and confidence in Colchester as a visitor destination with the group travel industry and mitigate costs and other issues which can deter groups from visiting, a coach and group tourism incentive scheme supported by a targeted promotional campaign including free bookable city centre coach parking (previously pay and display and not reservable), refreshment/shopping vouchers for drivers/couriers and a discount to the Castle was launched. In the first year of the scheme 50 groups registered bringing nearly 2,000 additional visitors to the city centre between May and Dec 2022.</p>
<p><b>Protect, enhance and celebrate Colchester’s unique heritage.</b></p>	<p>Visitor numbers for 2022-23 at the Castle exceeded pre-pandemic levels with total admissions and school groups reaching 89,634 people – a figure only previously reached in the years immediately after the castle’s redevelopment in 2014.</p>
	<p>The Castle welcomed the King and Consort as part of the celebration of city status.</p>

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

- 6.1 Consideration has been given to equality and diversity issues in respect of any decisions to implement the priorities set out in this report in line with agreed policies and procedures including production of Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate.

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

- 7.1 The priorities in this report support all the core themes of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan and helped set a direction of travel for the preparation of the new Strategic Plan from April 2023 onwards.

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 Consultation to inform and underpin a new Strategic Plan for 2023-26 was undertaken and the results reported to Cabinet when the proposed new plan was considered.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 A communications plan was developed to publicise the support available to residents to help manage the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1 The delivery of the priorities in this report have been managed within existing budgets.

## **11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications**

- 11.1 Delivery against several of the priorities detailed in this report have had a positive direct and indirect impact on, health, wellbeing, and community safety.

## **12. Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

- 12.1 Delivery against several of the priorities detailed in this report have also had a positive impact on environmental sustainability of both the Council and the City.

## **13. Health and Safety Implications**

- 13.1 There are no direct health and safety implications associated with this report.

## **14. Risk Management Implications**

- 14.1 The progress reported in this report has helped to mitigate the risks facing the Council in delivering its strategic priorities for the borough.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Spending Priorities Monitoring Report – April 2023

[2023-2024 Report 9 Alliance Administration Spending Priorities Monitoring Report.docx](#)

Appendix B – Strategic Plan Action Plan Year End Report 2022-23

[2022-2023 SPAP Year End Report.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Appendix C - Strategic Plan Action Plan Year End Report 2021-22

[2021 - 2022 Cabinet SPAP Year End Performance Report.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Appendix D - Strategic Plan Action Plan Year End Report 2020-21

[2020 - 2021 Cabinet SPAP Year End Performance Report.docx](#)

## **Background Papers**

None

