

Scrutiny Panel Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ
Tuesday, 13 February 2024 at 18:00**

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

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

You have the right to attend all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Cabinet. You also have the right to see the agenda (the list of items to be discussed at a meeting), which is usually published five working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published.

Dates of the meetings are available here:

<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/MeetingCalendar.aspx>.

Most meetings take place in public. This only changes when certain issues, for instance, commercially sensitive information or details concerning an individual are considered. At this point you will be told whether there are any issues to be discussed in private, if so, you will be asked to leave the meeting.

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Scrutiny Panel – Terms of Reference

1. To fulfil all the functions of an overview and scrutiny committee under section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and in particular (but not limited to):

- (a) To review corporate strategies;
- (b) To ensure that actions of the Cabinet accord with the policies and budget of the Council;
- (c) To monitor and scrutinise the financial performance of the Council, performance reporting and to make recommendations to the Cabinet particularly in relation to annual revenue and capital guidelines, bids and submissions;
- (d) To review the Council's spending proposals to the policy priorities and review progress towards achieving those priorities against the Strategic and Implementation Plans;
- (e) To review the financial performance of the Council and to make recommendations to the Cabinet in relation to financial outturns, revenue and capital expenditure monitors;
- (f) To review or scrutinise executive decisions made by Cabinet, the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee (in relation to decisions relating to off-street matters only) and the Colchester and Ipswich Joint Museums Committee which have been made but not implemented referred to the Panel pursuant to the Call-In Procedure;
- (g) To review or scrutinise executive decisions made by Portfolio Holders and officers taking key decisions which have been made but not implemented referred to the Panel pursuant to the Call-In Procedure;
- (h) To monitor the effectiveness and application of the Call-In Procedure, to report on the number and reasons for Call-In and to make recommendations to the Council on any changes required to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the process;
- (i) To review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of functions which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet;
- (j) At the request of the Cabinet, to make decisions about the priority of referrals made in the event of the volume of reports to the Cabinet or creating difficulty for the management of Cabinet business or jeopardising the efficient running of Council business;

2. To fulfil all the functions of the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee ("the Committee") under the Police and Justice Act 2006 and in particular (but not limited to):

- (a) To review and scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions;
- (b) To make reports and recommendations to the Council or the Cabinet with respect to the discharge of those functions.

COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Scrutiny Panel
Tuesday, 13 February 2024 at 18:00

The Scrutiny Panel Members are:

Councillor Darius Laws [Chairman]
Councillor Dennis Willetts [Deputy Chairman]
Councillor Tracy Arnold
Councillor Sam McCarthy
Councillor Sam McLean
Councillor Thomas Rowe
Councillor Fay Smalls

The Scrutiny Panel Substitute Members are:

All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members or members of this Panel.

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

1 Welcome and Announcements

The Chairman will welcome members of the public and Councillors and remind everyone to use microphones at all times when they are speaking. The Chairman will also explain action in the event of an emergency, mobile phones switched to silent, audio-recording of the meeting. Councillors who are members of the committee will introduce themselves.

2 Substitutions

Councillors will be asked to say if they are attending on behalf of a Committee member who is absent.

3 Urgent Items

The Chairman will announce if there is any item not on the published agenda which will be considered because it is urgent and will explain the reason for the urgency.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors will be asked to say if there are any items on the agenda about which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest which would prevent them from participating in any discussion of the item or participating in any vote upon the item, or any other registerable interest or non-registerable interest.

5 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Councillors will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024 are a correct record.

Scrutiny Panel Minutes 23 January 2024

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6 Have Your Say!

The Chairman will invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition on any item included on the agenda or any other matter relating to the terms of reference of the meeting. Please indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

7 Decisions Taken Under Special Urgency Provisions

To consider any Cabinet decisions taken under the special urgency provisions.

8 Cabinet or Portfolio Holder Decisions called in for Review

The Councillors will consider any Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decisions called in for review.

9 Items requested by members of the Panel and other Members

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

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

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

10 Review of Colchester City Council's Strategic Arts Partners

23 - 116

Review of the partnership arrangements with organisations receiving a Strategic Arts Partner Grant from the Council: The Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre and Firstsite.

11 Councillor Michelle Burrows, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage

A verbal briefing from the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage on matters within their portfolio.

12 Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2024-2025

117 -
122

The panel is invited to consider the Corporate Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Targets for 2024-2025.

13	Fit for the Future	123 - 208
	This report provides details of proposals to reimagine what we do as a Council and how we deliver services so it we are 'Fit for the Future'. The proposals are in the form of an integrated portfolio of activity covering all services that will transform their delivery, generate additional income and reduce our net operating costs by 25% over the next 3 years.	
14	Fit for the Future – The Estate Plan	209 - 220
	Public sector estates across the UK have suffered from decades of under investment. Although many of Colchester City Council owned buildings, land and public spaces are valuable for the contribution they make to communities, place-making and our economy, in financial terms they have generally become more of a liability than an asset and a drain on diminishing resources. Colchester City Council (the Council) have taken the brave decision to tackle this issue head on to fully understand the liabilities, risks and opportunities that lie within its estate.	
15	Community use of Colchester City Council Assets and Colchester Events Policy	221 - 224
	This briefing note sets out additional information relating to the Council's approach to the policy, use and charging towards the use of Council assets by Community Groups.	
16	Middle Mill Weir Collapse - Briefing	225 - 232
	This briefing sets out the position at Middle Mill following the recent collapse of the weir in December 2023.	
17	Work Programme 2023-24	233 - 246
	This report sets out the current Work Programme 2023-2024 for the Scrutiny Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.	
18	Exclusion of the Public (Scrutiny)	
	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).	

Part B
(not open to the public including the press)

SCRUTINY PANEL

23 January 2024

Present: - Councillor Arnold, Councillor Laws (Chair),
Councillor McCarthy, Councillor McLean,
Councillor Smalls, Councillor Willetts

Substitutions: - Councillor Sunnucks for Councillor Rowe

Also present: - Councillor Cory, Councillor Goss, Councillor King

438. Minutes of Previous Meetings

Owen Howell, Democratic Services Officer, explained that a minor change had needed to be made to the minutes for 14 November 2023, necessitating their reapproval by the Panel. The initial draft of the minutes originally approved for 14 November had not included the approval of the minutes from the 3 October 2023 Scrutiny Panel meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 14 November 2023 and 12 December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

439. Have Your Say

Mr Alan Short addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1), to raise a concern that, regarding the approval of the Council's current Local Plan, a submission provided by Natural England was not circulated to elected members prior to the approval of the Plan. This submission was in relation to Middlewick's importance in terms of natural interest and biodiversity. Mr Short alleged that a letter from Natural England was withheld from elected members, suggesting that elected members had received insufficient information, and that this meant a potential risk of legal action being brought to challenge the legitimacy of the Local Plan, and that any elected member involved could take this matter to court.

The Chairman stated that he would raise Mr Short's concerns with the Council's Monitoring Officer and ask him to respond to both the Chairman and to Mr Short.

Councillor Tim Young attended and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel to raise concerns about recent media reports regarding bailiff referrals regarding unpaid council tax, and an increase of these by 20% across the country. A BBC documentary had included a bailiff claiming to have been pressured to adopt questionable practices regarding such referrals. One agency named was Jacobs, which Councillor Young named as having been used in the past by the Council.

Councillor Young stated a desire to ensure that the Council was not using disreputable bailiff agencies.

The Chairman indicated that he understood the issue raised and, whilst he was not sure that it was a suitable item to add to the Panel's work programme, he gave assurance he would consider the matter personally, and that the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive were both present to hear the concern raised.

440. Work Programme 2023-34

With the Chair's permission, the Work Programme was approved before the substantive agenda items were considered.

Owen Howell, Democratic Services Officer, explained that a request had been made by Mandy Jones, Strategic Director, for the Panel to receive a report on the Council's draft Asset Strategy at its meeting on 13 February 2024, rather than the already-scheduled item on charging for use of Council assets. The Panel considered this request, noting that this would coincide with a briefing by the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage, which was appropriate given that the originally-scheduled item on charging for asset use originated from an issue that fell within the remit of that Portfolio Holder. The specific issue had been dealt with, but a Panel member stated that, when the Council was leveraging assets as fully as possible, there was a need to ensure that charging was not unreasonable and could be set at appropriate levels for the different potential users, such as youth and community groups.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Panel approves its work programme for 2023-24, subject to the addition of an item on the draft Asset Strategy, to be scheduled for 13 February 2024 and to focus on the need to ensure that charging for use of Council assets is not unreasonable and is set at appropriate levels for the different potential users.

441. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Resources]

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, covered the bedding in of new key members of Finance, specifically Andrew Small as Section 151 Officer providing strategic direction, and Chris Hartgrove as Deputy Section 151 Officer and lead officer of the Finance Team. Andrew and Chris were part of the shared services partnership with Epping Forest District Council, where they were also Section 151 Officer and Deputy respectively. These appointments had led to a process of improving presentation of accounting and transactional information.

Local authorities across the UK were at risk of technical bankruptcy. The Council was not in such a position, due to prudent budgeting, its reserves position, and minimising costs whilst increasing income. The past few months had been spent on the Budget process for 2024-25. Apologies were given for the late publication of the Budget report. The consultation process had included a meeting of the Leaders' Alumni Group the previous week, and was an open process including past leaders and current elected members. The capital review had included a members' workshop, which had proved useful and helped to set the corporate landlord

strategy. The corporate landlord team was being built, with Patricia Bowie brought in to provide expertise and skills. A business case had been made for the disposal or movement of certain assets.

A briefing was scheduled on the Fit for the Future Programme. This was a necessary part of meeting the expectations of the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) and the Budget, and was part of the transformation programme which had been worked upon over the current year. The Administration was seeking to talk through the programme with elected members as much as possible. The Local Council Tax Support Scheme had been simplified and banded, with a one-year transfer period during which no claimants would lose out and many would gain improved support. Rowan House was now re-open, with increased rental income from tenant organisations, and improved partnership working. Meanwhile, the pay award showed the Council's investment in its staff.

The Portfolio Holder related that it was frustrating not to have audited accounts available. The Council had worked to ensure that the accounts were as up-to-date as possible, but audit partners handling the public sector had experienced problems, with audit processes slowing.

Chris Hartgrove, Deputy Section 151 Officer, explained that the accounts for 2022-23 were close to publication and a tentative reserves position had been established on the balance sheet. The accounts for 2021-22 had been published in September 2023, and the 2020-21 audit process was active again and in progress. The relevant Minister had indicated that 30 September would be a backstop date, by which local authorities should have their 2022-23 accounts audited and signed off. This would include where qualified opinions would need to be given in order to meet that deadline.

Praise was given from the Panel for the delivery of a refurbished Rowan House.

Congratulations were given to the Finance Team for the way that the Budget had been presented, with a more transparent and easy-to-understand format which would help a layperson to read them. Presentation was now in terms of services, rather than opaque service areas. A Panel member noted that there must be work carried out alongside those overseeing the resources of the Council's companies. It was asked whether the companies' reduced role in service delivery had caused any problems, with a Panel member positing that such a redistribution of resource would need to be unscrambled and arguing that it was not possible to see a clear overview as to how resources were reassigned back to the Council. The Portfolio Holder explained that complex work was taking place under Richard Carr, Interim Managing Director of Colchester Commercial Holdings [CCHL], as to bringing assets back under direct Council control, working with the Leader of the Council and the Council's Chief Executive. The Interim Managing Director was staying on, in a one-day-per-week capacity to continue this work. Content would be shown in this year's Budget accounts as to how some of the restructuring would be carried out, covering certain asset-based costs. The changes would aim to reduce duplications and complexity.

A Panel member noted that the dormant companies could still hold assets, but that it would not be possible to carry out any transactions to reflect any depreciation in asset value, and asked how the Council would deal with any depreciation in asset value, especially where this was shown on balance sheets. The Deputy Section 151 Officer explained that there could be a write-down of assets, and could be a one-off cost, in six figures, to relate to the 2023-24 financial year.

The Deputy Section 151 Officer was asked about the significant loans made by the Council to Colchester Amphora Energy Limited [CAEL], and to explain their absence from the Budget report. The Deputy Section 151 Officer explained that the implications of the loans were included within the Budget.

A Panel member noted that a list of staff cuts had been provided, but nothing to cover the intention given that the Council would move to do less in the future. It was argued that elected members needed to know what reductions would be made in work carried out, to ensure that staff were not overloaded. The Portfolio Holder explained the approach to 'Fit for the Future', and the necessity of doing less. An example was garden waste collection, which was a non-statutory service that the Council provided, and its move from a free collection to a subscription service. The reduction in team staffing could result in the need to increase turnaround times for work, such as the processing of Housing Benefit claims. Alongside service reductions, increases in income would be necessary. The options presented had included mixtures of reducing service provision and increasing charges and fees. Some non-statutory services might need to be ceased, whilst a slower turnaround times on statutory service delivery could lengthen.

The Portfolio Holder committed to holding more discussions with members in coming months. The Chief Executive outlined the Senior Leadership Board meeting, which would consider the details on 1 February 2024 and flesh these out, including a detailed HR plan, which would cover support for staff. The proposal from the Council's leadership was for a cut in staffing levels of 25%. Further strands of work to be done included how to work with stakeholders and external partners, and how elected members could be involved in setting how 'Fit for the Future' was delivered. A smaller staff would not be expected to maintain the Council's total level of work, and the Chief Executive acknowledged the challenge to explain the need for remaining staff that the Council would need to do less. Assurances were given that the areas where service reduction would be carried out would be shown, and a governance process agreed as to how this would be done.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that the Portfolio Holder for Resources provides further information, to a future Cabinet meeting, on what is done to allocate assets which had previously been held under companies wholly-owned by the Council, where those companies are put into dormancy.

442. Business case for charging for the kerbside collection of garden waste

The Chairman laid out that the decision to initiate the new paid subscription model had already been taken by Cabinet, and that this report was to consider the latest information relating to the scheme's operation.

Councillor Martin Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, gave an overview of the previous work done to introduce the new collection system and charging. Feedback from Scrutiny Panel had been taken onboard, with the service now operating well with very few issues. The targets which had been set were for 11% uptake by January 2024 (7,758 properties) and £600k income [with some accounting complexities affecting where income and expenditure was to be accounted for, between 2023-24 and 2024-25]. The Council had now recorded a 24% uptake rate, as of 22 January, which was over double the target level. It was thought that the offer of 15 months for the price of 12 had helped increase uptake. 16,796 households had signed up by that point, with an income for the Council of £780,731 so far. It was noted that £50k had been put aside to use in helping those on Local Council Tax Support.

A Panel member asked how 11% had been chosen as the initial target for uptake. The Portfolio Holder explained that 11% was the lowest uptake level at which the business case would have stacked up. This had been decided after speaking to other local authorities and taking an approach which was similar to what those councils had done.

Rosa Tanfield, Head of Neighbourhood Services, gave a run-through of the decision making, through Full Council and Cabinet, to move to the current system. The expected profit for the Council was given at £471k so far, having deducted the cost of support for those in receipt of Local Council Tax Support. £20,290 had been claimed for this purpose so far. A net income of over £1.24m was projected for the financial year.

The change in collection system had meant that there could be a net reduction in the fleet, with a reduction by one vehicle. This meant a saving of £31k per year. The redeployment of staff was explained, including to minimise the effect of the recruitment freeze. The service was meeting and exceeding expectations and a team from across the Council had worked to launch this service, committed to providing a high standard of provision.

A Panel member praised the success, but argued that the service change was an unpopular one. The Portfolio Holder emphasised that the charge levied on service users was a service charge, not a tax, as this was a non-statutory service. A Panel member queried whether the scheme was making real savings, with changes up and down on a variety of different cost centres.

Another Panel member argued that, when Scrutiny Panel had looked at the new scheme proposals, it had only been given an incomplete presentation of the business case, which was why the subject had been added to the Panel's work programme. The report here showed that the financial side of the scheme had been very successful, moving from a £1.8m per year service cost to the Council, and replacing this with an additional revenue of £1.3m. This represented an almost £3m improvement in the Council's finances and was a significant turnaround.

It was remembered that the previous consideration of this by Scrutiny Panel had seen questions asked as to the resource implications from reducing an all-household

collection service down to a subscription only service. A Panel member asked what would happen to the vehicles and staff no longer needed for this service, as this had not been answered at the previous meeting on this subject. The report did set out that staff would be redeployed to cover other services and backfill vacancies in the general waste system. A Panel member argued that the redeployment should lead to a significant drop in use of agency staff, and the Head of Neighbourhood Services was asked where this was shown. Members had been told that £365k had been spent on agency staff in the first nine months of waste collection in 2023-24. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained the backfill and use of agency staff. Waste collection was one of the Council's biggest staffing areas, working all year round and employing many lower-paid staff. Sickness rates had been high, due to the nature of the work, but the past year had seen significant reductions in this, due to the support being offered.

A report would be received at the next Cabinet meeting, to propose a new arrangement of agency contracting, lowering its cost. There was still reliance on agency staffing, with work ongoing to reduce this. The budget for agency staffing was only officially £20k, with balances having to be managed and vacancy factors used to offset additional agency costs. This was not sustainable and would need to change. Certain vacancies would be filled, with some staff turnover. This meant no actual change in the official budget for agency costs, but would mean a rebalancing of staffing costs in general. The Portfolio Holder took questions and explained that there would always be a need for some agency staffing, as this was necessary to cover sick leave, training and holiday leave. The backfill of staff would be for permanent role vacancies, including HGV drivers, where there was a shortage. Investment was being made in training staff (including a partial payback agreement). The split between employed and agency staffing had been roughly 80%/20%, but work was underway to reduce the agency component and reduce overspend on agency staffing.

An invitation was made for all elected members to visit the Shrub End depot.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources underlined the importance of tackling agency employment. The changes would increase resilience in the collection service whilst keeping an agency staff allocation. This would be looked at again in future years, once the garden waste service bedded in more fully. The Portfolio Holder for Resources agreed to share figures relating to the staffing costs and backfill operation.

A Panel member praised the work of waste collection staff, and asked what percentage of residents receiving Council Tax support were subscribed to the scheme. Questions were also asked as to whether a wide geographical spread of subscribers was reflected in the figures.

John Kellett, Business Improvement Manager, informed the Panel that there had been 718 successful applications for support, by residents receiving Council Tax support. Eligible applicants had their joining fee refunded. The Council had budgeted support for up to 1,200 people, and this could be revisited if the maximum number reached. There was a higher take up of the scheme in rural areas, with expectations that there would be around one bin collection per four properties. The same area had

to be covered as under the old service, but with fewer pickups. As subscriptions increased in number, the resilience and reliability of the service would need to be maintained, so extra capacity was possible in the system. The highest sign up rates were in Rural North and Prettygate Wards, with low sign up rates in Castle Ward, due in part to the types of properties found there.

443. 2024-25 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, Medium Term Financial Forecast, Treasury Management Investment Strategy, Housing Revenue Accounts Estimate and Housing Investment Programme

Councillor Tim Young attended and, with the Chair's consent, addressed the Panel to raise concern that the survey about the Budget, which had been sent to councillors, was only two questions long and therefore too simple and flawed. Councillor Young asked that this approach was not used in the future. The survey had identified public relations, marketing and communications work as being most identified by elected members as an appropriate place in which to make savings. Councillor Young noted a small saving in this area, but argued that £600k spending was a lot for such work and requested a breakdown of this total spend, to identify ways to make savings. This would be needed quickly, to be considered when Full Council received the Budget.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources thanked the staff who had produced the draft Budget. It had required an immense effort to close this budget, given the situation. Thanks were also given to those staff who had worked at the Council, but whose employment by the Council may be coming to an end. Council Tax would rise in line with other local authorities and, after some years of drawing on reserves, there would be elements of contribution back to the General Fund reserves. The pay award was covered and, due to this, there was being a reduction in the number of staff positions. The Fit for the Future Programme was introduced, with Appendix C giving more information, broken down by service area.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the Budget survey for councillors had been made to be very open and not prescriptive, which was why it was so short. Councillors had been given an in-person briefing, in the spirit of managing the Council's finances together, and this had been successful at giving details and promoting discussion.

Chris Hartgrove, Deputy Section 151 Officer, described this as a prudent budget. An initial identified £1.44m deficit had grown to £2.4m, as additional detail was gained, but this deficit had been eliminated. The Capital Programme and General Fund were now in line with the previous forecast, and forecasting had now moved from a three-year to a five-year span.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council, explained the strategic intentions behind the Fit for the Future Programme. No-one wished to increase charges to residents, but this was given as necessary, due to falls in central government funding, and the need to avoid having to issue a Section 114 report, by reforming Council spending. The Council would withdraw from some services and lower costs where possible. The strategy would be bottom up, mindful of social benefits and the need to care for the most vulnerable. The Communications Team was given as being important in explaining the changes being made, advertising the Council's work and revenue-

generating events and attractions. Scrutiny Panel was asked to look at the Budget strategy, with more detail to come in coming weeks.

A Panel member asked how exposed the Council was to potential dramatic changes in interest rates and for assurance regarding the security of reserves banked by the Council. The Portfolio Holder explained the analysis of the macroeconomic situation which had been carried out, and the independent views sought. A pause and reduction in the capital programme would lead to less debt financing and greater investment. More borrowing was being looked at for the long term, but in the short term there would be lower levels of borrowing and more investment, leading to less exposure to costs from interest rates. The Deputy S151 Officer explained that an advantage of the shared services model was the availability of a wider pool of advice from consultants, giving a more diverse range of input and views. Regarding safety of deposits, the Council maintained a list of places recommended for savings, which was updated daily.

Further questions were asked by the Panel regarding interest rates, with one member stating that the Council was borrowing £132m at fixed, long-term interest rates, whilst holding investments of between £40m and £80m, subject to variable interest rates, and saying that this meant that the increase in the interest rates had led to savings, but represented an unnecessary credit risk. The view was given that a Treasury Management Strategy Statement was needed in order for councillors to consider whether the Council should be borrowing and investing so much, with one Panel member stating that this was a necessity before councillors were asked to support the Budget. The Deputy S151 Officer agreed that the position regarding borrowing and investment, as put forward by Panel members, had been the case but the approach was now to reduce the amounts involved. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement would be produced once updated; owing to capacity constraints in the Finance Team, this would not be ready prior to the Budget being considered. It was expected to come to Governance and Audit Committee in March 2024.

A Panel member commended the Leader's openness and work of officers, but complained at the lack of benchmark figures from separate service areas and that those which were available did not match the figures contained within the Budget. The suggestion was made by the Panel member that benchmarking should be carried out by all service areas, and include comparisons against private sector companies, in order to identify where cuts could be made.

Panel members agreed with comments by Councillor Young that the survey sent to elected members was too simplistic and concern was raised that it did not garner useful responses.

A concern was raised that the Council would not manage to achieve the elimination of deficit and projected increase in reserves detailed in the Medium Term Financial Forecast [MTFF]. A Panel member suggested that the Council was likely to reach a £5m deficit in 2024-25. The Portfolio Holder was asked how he expected the Council to eliminate the Budget deficit and provide the £153k identified for adding to reserves. More clarity was requested in the displaying of cumulative deficit projections for the years shown, and a reserves statement was asked for, to show the current situation and constraints within which the Council would need to work,

and to be consistent with the reserves position. A Panel member argued that the Fit for the Future Programme should start by reflecting the need to reduce staffing levels at the Council which, in that member's view, had not been attempted as yet.

The Portfolio Holder argued that the Council's headcount had changed, with reductions at the Amphora companies, and changes at Colchester Borough Homes [CBH]. There had been a reduction in FTE employment over time, whilst the Council also dealt with Covid-19. In response to further queries regarding FTE employment levels and staff pay levels reducing in real terms, the Portfolio Holder emphasised the latest pay award, and agreed to seek further detail on the figures for FTE employment.

The Deputy S151 Officer clarified that the table at 3.4 of Appendix C showed the budget deficits forecast over the five years of the MTFF. The Council had a legal obligation to produce a balanced budget, meaning that it had to eliminate these deficits as it proceeded. These were projected deficits and so the Council could not act to eliminate them all in advance. By year five, the table showed the cumulative structural deficit of £2.8m that would need to be met by the end of the time period.

A Panel member complained that the figures did not add up, and that the cumulative deficit figure given was not the actual cumulative deficit. The Leader of the Council offered for an explanatory note to be produced in order to explain and clarify the content of table 3.4 of Appendix C. The Panel member underlined the Panel's role in scrutinising the Budget and giving a view to Cabinet regarding the assurances provided to support it. It was argued that the Panel could not do this if the information with which it was presented was not clear and did not show what it purported to show, and that the budget could not be valid without the requested clarity. The Panel member also stated that no data had been given on 'Fit for the Future', which meant that the Panel would not be able to give a view on whether this was a safe way for the Council to proceed.

The Deputy S151 Officer stated that a reserves statement could be presented, but that the final accounts would be needed in order to give accuracy on this. Owing to greater levels of risk, it was felt prudent to increase the minimum level of reserves to £3m, plus a contingency fund for the Fit for the Future Programme, to cover any shortfall in savings targets, and to invest where this is judged to be prudent. Other costs might also arise, and their impacts covered. The Finance Team were aware of the 2023-24 budget trajectory and the reduction in useable earmarked reserves, down by £5m since March 2022.

The Leader explained that reserves had had to be allocated, and the administration was trying to share information to improve confidence, including on Fit for the Future. Not all information on service changes could be shared, as this had not all been decided as yet. The need for robust project management was underlined and was being addressed, with more information to be provided to councillors at the earliest opportunity. The aim was to provide this for the Budget paper due to go to Full Council for approval. The Leader emphasised the need to understand the challenge of showing changes to a large organisation, giving clarity in figures including those relating to employment levels. It was acknowledged that performance should be examined across the Council, for benchmarking purposes.

The Panel questioned what stress testing had been done on the basket of assumptions upon which the Budget rested. The Portfolio Holder explained that the Administration had previously looked at a range of scenarios, from the higher, mid-point and lower ends of expectations, but admitted that it was hard to make predictions. This was why external advice was sought. The Budget assumed an inflation rate of 3%, so rises in inflation above that would mean that the Budget would need to be revisited and the effects mitigated. The Council was agile and could make necessary changes, but some things could not be forecast, such as the result of the next pay award negotiation.

Further concern was raised about the lack of background information on the Fit for the Future Programme, and it was asked why these couldn't have been provided to the Panel for consideration in confidential session, and whether the information was not yet ready. The Portfolio Holder stated that the information could be made ready and provided to Governance and Audit Committee. This was about delivering a reduction in staffing and work done at the Council, so as to deliver balanced budgets. The Programme was to be detailed at a session of Senior Leadership Board on 1 February 2024, along with its delivery plans. Assumptions regarding charging for entry to Hollytrees Museum did factor in an expected fall in visitor numbers. The figures for savings were put forward, following consideration by Cabinet and Management.

The Chief Executive Officer underlined that the Budget report held sufficient detail to give assurance to the Section 151 Officer and Deputy S151 Officer that the Budget could proceed. Huge work had been done in preparation for the Fit for the Future Programme, which went to the Leadership Team in December 2023 and would come back for Senior Leadership Board to consider on 1 February 2024. The almost-final form of the Fit for the Future Programme would then come to Scrutiny Panel on 13 February 2024, prior to Full Council then receiving the Budget report later that month.

The Panel considered the Housing Revenue Account [HRA]. A Panel member gave the view that the Management Fee for CBH produced a very high cost per property for the Arm's Length Management Organisation [ALMO] comparing this with management costs per property for Housing Associations. £6m had been given as a figure for depreciation, with a major reserve for repairs. The Panel member noted the complicated accounting.

The Leader explained that the Council's view of CBH was that the company shows strong performance and low costs for its work, but welcomed the testing of this view. CBH managed a large and complex estate, whilst also managing services such as those for tackling homelessness. The Chief Executive explained that the review of the HRA would be led by Lindsay Barker, Deputy Chief Executive, and would be a deep dive look into the HRA and affordability of the housing stock into the future. CBH staff were under great pressure, due to the housing crisis, with emotional and financial pressures being considerable.

A Panel member remarked that the Boston Square for CBH key performance indicators [KPIs] was seen by Governance and Audit Committee and that, if there

were concerns that direct comparisons were not being provided, this needed to be communicated to CBH to see what they then present. The Leader commented that the selections for benchmarking were comparable organisations, and that benchmarking would be part of the HRE review by the Deputy Chief Executive. The Portfolio Holder for Resources clarified that there might be some disposal of isolated assets, but the general stock under the HRA would not be included, and would not become part of the corporate landlord model. CBH had had high performance and low cost results for years, and this could be added as extra appendices.

A member of the Panel recommended benchmarking CBH and the HRA together, and suggested benchmarking CBH against Swan, Eastlight and Clarion, which were all housing associations.

The Scrutiny Panel further discussed the suggested production of a Treasury Management Strategy [TMS] Statement and a statement on reserves. The Portfolio Holder stated that a working draft could be shared of both of these, with forecasts. The TMS had helped the base budget this year and showed that it was delivering. A Panel member restated the wish to know details on borrowing and investments, and in the respective interest rates. The Deputy Section 151 Officer agreed that it would be possible to draw out and show the interest rates on borrowing and investments. This would be easier than providing an updated TMS Statement in line with the 2021 Code.

More detail was requested regarding the budgeting for repair of the Town Hall roof, where £1m had been set aside to address the issues. The Portfolio Holder gave assurance that repair costs were being tightened down. The Leader committed to providing adequate resources to carry out the repair. The final cost was not yet known, but would be reflected in the pricing of work, where possible. The Town Hall was described as a key building, albeit not well used and in poor shape. Richard Block, Chief Operating Officer, gave assurance that the Council was aware of the need for wide engagement with stakeholders over the future of the building.

The Panel queried why £1m had been allocated for ICT spending, in light of the expected reductions in employment levels. The Portfolio Holder argued that a prudent level had been set, with revenue costs including license costs, including for Microsoft and Capita software. The Chief Operating Officer emphasised the need for transformation and change, with investment into IT making this possible. Councillor oversight would be crucial for the future ICT Strategy, before spending is allocated. A Panel member noted that most of the ICT cost related to the revenue spending, for example on annual licenses, rather than being capital spending, and argued that a flexible approach was needed, rather than buying and storing a lot of hardware. The Portfolio Holder committed to seeking detail on the breakdown between revenue and capital spending being budgeted for ICT. Investment in programmes would be used to drive channel shift, and it was reasonable to include this in the Budget. The Deputy Section 151 Officer confirmed the capitalizable expenditure, but agreed that the point on revenue spending was valid. Material Requirements Planning values went into revenue costs.

The Portfolio Holder and Leader were asked why there was no information available on the £7.7m included for enabling infrastructure, including work on a junction of the

A12. A Panel member ventured that, given the size of this amount, a business case was needed to lay out how it was to be used, and that there was insufficient information given to justify its allocation. The Leader noted the good terms of the relationship between officers and members of the Council and Essex County Council, and that 8.1 of the Cabinet report covered this subject. The Leader accepted that a cross reference would have been helpful for the Panel, but gave assurances that there was enough depth and detail to give confidence regarding the cost estimate published, overseen by the Deputy Chief Executive. The Leader was told that Panel members did not doubt the scrutiny carried out by officers, but a Panel member maintained that the Panel had not been given the information necessary for it to judge whether a sensible approach was being taken. The Leader noted this point, but pointed out that this had already been considered by Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet. The Council had already agreed to the course of action to which this £7.7m related.

A Panel member criticised the perceived lack of an appraisal to support the Capital Programme, arguing that the Town Deal had meant to be £17-£17m, but that the report only detailed £4m of this, for the Heart of Greenstead project. The Leader was asked to show where the balance was, and whether funding might be lost if not allocated. The Leader gave assurance that no Town Deal funding had been lost, and offered to follow up to give reassurance on this. The Deputy Section 151 Officer clarified that the table showed current plans for future spending on Town Deal work, but did not cover past spending. The scheme history was shown on the right of the table to show totals for spending. The total approved budget reflected earlier years, and the Deputy Section 151 Officer offered to find any answers to questions regarding specific schemes.

In answer to questions about borrowing in the past year, and any potential plans to borrow more, the Deputy Section 151 Officer explained that this would be covered in the borrowing analysis which had been promised.

The Panel considered the breakdown of funding within the HRA, noting the £205m in HRA spending projected for the coming five years. One Panel member complained that the long projections made were unrealistic regarding how to finance social housing and argued that alternative ways to provide social housing should be examined. The Deputy Section 151 Officer explained that there would be a refreshed 30-year business plan to lay out the affordability of what was being planned. The Portfolio Holder highlighted problems caused by rent reductions imposed by central government, and the turbulent times experienced. Confidence was held in the figures by the Council's Administration, and that the change regarding affordable rents would lead to improved viability.

The Portfolio Holder was asked why the Vineyard Street and Britannia car parks were included in the Capital Programme, but that no income loss from their closure was included in the MTF. The Portfolio Holder agreed to get additional information on this and the assumptions behind what was laid out. The belief was that most of the users of these car parks would shift to use other Council car parks, with the closures leading to the Council no longer having to pay out on business rates for their operation. The Leader emphasised that this was looked at in terms of the full Parking Strategy.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that the following further information be produced to support Council's consideration of the 2024-25 Revenue Budget and Medium-Term Financial Forecast: -

- a) A statement of reserves for the period of the 2024-25 Revenue Budget, consistent with the reserves position;
- b) A Treasury Management Strategy Statement or further information on the current position on Treasury Management.
- c) A supplementary note for the Medium Term Financial Forecast to provide clarity and explanation regarding Appendix C and the cumulative deficit figures regarding the General Fund budget from 2024/25 through to 2028/29



Scrutiny Panel

Item

13 February 2024

Report of

Dr Frank Hargrave, Head of Museums,
Culture and Tourism

Author

Claire Taylor Visitor
and Cultural Services
Manager

Title

Review of Colchester City Council's Strategic Arts Partners: The Mercury
Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre and Firstsite

☎ 282655

Wards
affected

Not applicable

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Review of the partnership arrangements with organisations receiving a Strategic Arts Partner Grant from the Council: The Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre and Firstsite.
- 1.2 Representatives from these three organisations will attend and present to the Panel:

Mercury Theatre: Steve Mannix, Executive Director
Colchester Arts Centre: Anthony Roberts, Director
Firstsite: Sally Shaw, Director

Their presentations are attached as Appendices G to I.

The Chairs of the respective Boards of Trustees have also been invited to attend.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel is invited to review the performance and programming of each organisation and consider how effectively this supports the Council's strategic priorities and provides value for money for the funding provided.

3. Reason for Scrutiny

- 3.1 Regular reviews of the Council's grant funded strategic arts partners are undertaken by the Panel at its request.

4. Background Information

4.1 Introduction

Colchester's leading cultural organisations help make the city a vibrant place to live, learn, visit, and work. They offer audiences high quality art and entertainment, but also provide a huge variety of opportunities for residents to come together and be creative, in welcoming and accessible spaces, supporting health, wellbeing, and community cohesion.

In partnership with Colchester City Council (CCC) each is custodian of a key landmark building and community asset. They work closely with CCC to ensure these remain fit for purpose and have an impressive record of success in leveraging in external capital investment to maintain and improve the venues.

These organisations are also integral to the creative industries and hospitality sectors and are active participants in key partnerships across the city, including the Creative Colchester CIC and the Business Improvement District (BID).

The Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre and Firstsite receive funding through the Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) investment scheme. The Mercury and Firstsite also receive annual grants from Essex County Council (ECC). Together the funding provided to these key organisations by ACE, the Council and ECC helps deliver a strong cultural asset base for Colchester, underpinning the wider creative community.

In October 2021 the Council announced a new funding settlement for the three Strategic Arts Partners from financial year 2023/24, providing the organisations with certainty and continuity in terms of their financial planning, and supporting their continued recovery after the disruption of the Covid 19 pandemic and the current challenges of the cost-of-living crisis.

The impact of the recent pandemic on cultural provision and practice was severe. However, this period also served to highlight the importance of the arts to individuals and communities. Led by these organisations the city's cultural sector has both recovered and continues to demonstrate growth, resilience, and ingenuity despite the economic headwinds.

The Organisations

The Mercury Theatre

The Mercury Theatre is the most active professional producing theatre in East Anglia, attracting audiences of more than 100,000 people each year with a broad and vibrant programme staged across two auditoria. Community, education and outreach sessions, attended by a record 36,000 children, young people and adults in 2022/23, are a vital and hugely popular resource for residents. Professional mentoring programmes such as the Mercury Creatives programme support the wider creative economy. Mercury Productions has an ambitious touring programme, reaching audiences and generating critical attention at a national level, helping to raise the profile of Colchester. The theatre has a large and positive economic impact, as a significant local employer, contractor of services, and a major driver of the restaurant and hospitality economy in Colchester, with audiences estimated to spend over £3million annually in the city centre.

The 'Mercury Rising' redevelopment project delivered a highly impressive state of the art facility for the organisation and audiences, and a new community hub for Colchester city centre which welcomes everyone into the building, whether for a performance, an activity, a coffee, or just free WIFI. It has been a designated 'warm place' over the past two winters. The impact of the redevelopment goes beyond the building itself, with new activity and events making the most of improved public realm around the site and animating a key area of the historic city centre, adjacent to the Roman Wall and Jumbo.

In January 2024 the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) confirmed a capital grant of £500k to the Mercury to further improve the onsite facilities including an extension on the second floor to create new rehearsal/meeting room space, the purchase of new theatrical LED lighting equipment and the installation of permanent digital cameras in the theatre, studio, rehearsal room and creative engagement spaces. This work is scheduled for completion by Sept 2024.

Colchester Arts Centre

Housed in the historic St Mary's at the Wall church, Colchester Arts Centre (CAC) reached its largest total audience to date in 2022/23 with a diverse programme across a wide range of contemporary performing arts and popular events. The sheer variety and number of events taking place at the venue, on almost every day of the year, make it a key asset in attracting people into the centre of Colchester.

The Arts Centre takes a leading role in the development of new live art through commissions and partnerships, including the Wonderful Wednesday's programme which showcases emerging talent at a pay what you can price to encourage audiences to support new performers.

CAC is also a leader in widening access to the arts through a comprehensive and ongoing programme of improvements, ensuring audience members with additional needs receive excellent customer care from the booking stage through to arrival at the venue, where the introduction of Access Host roles has ensured they have the best experience on the night.

Backed by the ACE Small Capital Grant scheme and supported by the Council, a £700K project to upgrade the venue was completed in 2021. The works transformed accessibility for disabled artists, improved environmental efficiency and technical infrastructure, and redecorated and restored areas of the historic Grade 2 Listed Building. As an example of the care taken to create a unique environment reflecting the building's past and present, the mosaic artist Anne Schwegmann Fielding was commissioned to incorporate artworks into the architectural design created from the old crockery and historic coinage, donated by the people who use and love the venue. As the result CAC was recognised at the Loo of The Year Awards in 2023!

Firstsite

Housed in a landmark building designed by international architect Rafael Viñoly, Firstsite is a leading contemporary visual arts organisation presenting free exhibitions of both local, regional and internationally renowned artists, as well as events, activities, and workshops. The organisation is a national leader in commissioning new art, providing innovative learning opportunities, and supporting the professional development of artists, particularly those from diverse backgrounds.

The venue provides an accessible space in the heart of the city centre for individuals and groups to interact and engage in a variety of ways, from attending a screening or participating in an activity to relaxing in the café. As a unique building and a free attraction is it an important tourism asset for Colchester. Recent upgrades to the cinema and auditorium, as well as ongoing work to replace the lighting throughout the building, are all improving the visitor experience as Firstsite moves into its second decade open to the public on this site.

The introduction of new opening hours in summer 2023 and the launch of a Membership scheme at the end of last year demonstrate how Firstsite continues to innovate to attract new users. With open hours extended into the evening on three nights a week it is supporting the diversification of the early nighttime economy, enriching the city centre offer.

Since 2017 Firstsite's Holiday Fun programme has provided children, young people and their families the opportunity to eat, learn, be active and have fun together through offering free art and movement based activities throughout the holidays, crucially along with free hot meals to families who will benefit from them. The number of meals provided over this period now stands at over 21,000. An increasing necessary and vital programme it has provided a template for other organisations to follow.

4.2 Partnership Delivery Arrangements

Annual Funding Agreements are agreed in close consultation with each organisation and set out the activity and targets around delivery. The Funding Agreements for the previous financial year with outcomes completed by the organisations and the current agreements for 2023/24 are attached as Appendices A-F.

A Member of Colchester City Council is nominated to sit on the Board of each organisation. Currently these are:

Mercury Theatre:	Cllr Lyn Barton
Colchester Arts Centre:	Cllr Mick Spindler
Firstsite:	Cllr Steph Nissan

4.3 Financial Arrangements

Grants to the Strategic Arts Partner organisations are agreed by Cabinet and full Council. A new funding settlement from FY23/24 was included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Forecast in October 2021. At the time it was agreed this would align with the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation investment programme 23/24-25/26. In January 2024 ACE

announced this would be extended by a year, subject to application, and the Council will now review whether it is possible to extend their own commitment to match this.

Under the current settlement in each financial year over this period the Council will provide revenue grant funding of:

- £168,175 to The Mercury Theatre
- £48,175 to Colchester Arts Centre
- £97,000 to Firstsite

Grants are paid in quarterly instalments.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

5.1 Not applicable

6. Standard References

6.1 There are no consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications of this review.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 The relationship between Colchester City Council and the Strategic Arts Partners relates to the 'Celebrating Our City, Heritage and Culture' theme in the [Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#)

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A Funding Agreement with The Mercury Theatre 2022/23

Appendix B Funding Agreement with The Mercury Theatre 2023/24

Appendix C Funding Agreement with Colchester Arts Centre 2022/23

Appendix D Funding Agreement with Colchester Arts Centre 2023/24

Appendix E Funding Agreement with Firstsite 2022/23

Appendix F Funding Agreement with Firstsite 2023/24

Appendix G Mercury Theatre: Presentation to the Panel

Appendix H Colchester Arts Centre: Presentation to the Panel

Appendix I Firstsite: Presentation to the Panel

Funding Agreement between Colchester Borough Council and the Mercury Theatre

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Colchester's vibrant cultural sector is one of the Borough's unique selling points and something that Colchester Borough Council (CBC) aims to support and sustain, working with partners to align policy and funding to help deliver key social and economic outcomes through investment in the arts.
- 1.2 As Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) Colchester Arts Centre (CAC), The Mercury Theatre and Firstsite are key partners, together providing leadership, capacity, and innovative programmes of delivery that contribute to making Colchester a great place to live, learn, work and visit.
- 1.3 CBC provides core revenue grants to these organisations under the Strategic Arts Partner programme; to enable them to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan and specifically the actions within the new [Cultural Strategy for Colchester](#); support Creative Colchester, a framework for enhancing the impact of the arts and creative industries on the local economy; and contribute to initiatives which help reduce inequalities and which support health, wellbeing and community cohesion across the Borough.
- 1.4 As part of the Council's commitment to transparency, quality and performance management systems, the organisations that receive CBC funding must set out clear objectives and provide performance and sector data so that the service provided through partnership working can be measured, evaluated and improved. This document defines the performance targets and monitoring process and confirms the funding amounts currently agreed.

2.0 Scope and Financial Arrangements

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, the Council will fund the Mercury Theatre to the amount of £168,175. This is a funding settlement agreed by Cabinet in line with budget strategy to support the core operations of the organisation, as set out in the business and operations plan and to meet the targets for performance set out in section 9 of this Agreement.
- 2.2 Upon signature of this Agreement, the Council will release the funding in quarterly instalments.
- 2.3 Any financial investment that the Council needs to make under its obligations as the owner of the theatre buildings is deemed to be outside of this agreement. However, any tenant responsibilities that the Mercury Theatre holds are considered to be within this agreement.
- 2.4 On signing this Agreement, the Mercury Theatre recognises that it is in receipt of public funding and accepts responsibility for showing proof of eligibility,

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meetings the targets for performance, and collecting qualitative and quantitative performance data to provide evidence of the service standards. The Theatre also agreed to provide available sector data to assist with monitoring and performance assessment.

- 2.5 Where appropriate and possible within current resources, Colchester Borough Council will provide non-financial support to the Mercury Theatre where it seeks to develop additional services that contribute towards meeting the Council's strategic priorities. If these additional services are developed to a point that requires additional funding, the Mercury Theatre may request such funding formally, and the Council may issue a separate funding agreement if applicable. If this circumstance arises, the services will be deemed to fall outside of this agreement.

3.0 Eligibility and Criteria for Acceptance

- 3.1 In order to be eligible for funding the Mercury Theatre must supply evidence to demonstrate that it is:
 - a. Properly constituted
 - b. Financially viable
 - c. Able to manage its work effectively, monitor and manage risk, and seek necessary professional financial, legal and insurance advice
 - d. Operating with effective policies and procedures in equal opportunities, health and safety, equality and diversity, access, and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - e. Delivering on the current strategic priorities of the Council.

4.0 Performance monitoring framework

- 4.1 The Mercury Theatre must submit an up to date Business Plan and operations information to CBC, including a budget to cover the same period as the funding agreement and a copy of the audited accounts from 2021-22 when available.
- 4.2 As a minimum throughout the term of the agreement, the Mercury Theatre must submit quarterly budget reports if required and invite a Council representative to observe Board meetings if appropriate. The organisation will also participate in an annual review meeting, as outlined below.
- 4.3 At the end of the agreement period, the organisation must provide audited accounts and submit performance data to evidence the organisation's turnover, audience and participation levels as well as contribution to the Council's strategic priorities.

5.0 Annual review process

- 5.1 A review meeting will take place between Colchester Borough Council and Mercury Theatre at least once during the period of the agreement. The meetings shall be attended by the Portfolio Holder (PFH), relevant officer(s) of the Council and Executive staff of the Mercury Theatre.

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5.2 The Portfolio Holder and Theatre Management may be asked to sit before a Scrutiny Panel to monitor performance and achievements. As such, the annual review process should be seen as an opportunity to ensure that the Portfolio Holder can evidence performance within their area of responsibility.

6.0 Acknowledgement of funding

6.1 The Mercury Theatre will acknowledge its financial assistance from CBC in all marketing and communication materials in print, electronic, broadcast and other formats.

6.2 The organisation is asked to specify particular steps that it will take within the period of this Agreement to promote the support that it receives from the Council in Section 9.

7.0 General conditions

7.1 The funding provided under this agreement may not be assigned to any other person, association or company other than in the course of delivering the Business Plan and agreed performance targets.

7.2 This agreement does not constitute the Mercury Theatre as an agent of the Council or otherwise make the Council liable to any person who may take proceedings against the Theatre.

7.3 The Council reserves the right to nominate annually a councillor to be a director on the Mercury Board.

7.4 Funds will be repayable in full to the Council in the event of any of the following:

- i. Misuse of payment received from the Council by Mercury Theatre
- ii. A breach of the law by Mercury Theatre
- iii. Petitioning the court for the appointment of an administrator
- iv. Having a receiver appointed over all or any part of the Theatre's assets
- v. Being the subject of a petition or resolution for the Mercury Theatre's 'winding up'

7.5 The Council should be consulted where any change or development in the direction of the organisation's affairs might affect this Agreement.

8.0 Breach in agreement

8.1 In the event of either the Council or the Mercury Theatre notifying the other in writing of a breach in this agreement, the parties shall meet to discuss the alleged breach within 21 days.

8.2 Both the Council and the Mercury Theatre agree that they have an equal responsibility to reach a practical and reasonable solution to the breach, but if after 12 weeks a solution has not been agreed then the parties mutually agree to arbitration.

9.0 Specification of performance targets

- 9.1 The specification of performance targets is developed collaboratively between the Council and the Mercury Theatre. The information provided here substantiates the Council's decision to invest public funds and helps to strengthen the partnership delivery model.
- 9.2 The information is set out to help to convey to Members, officers and partners how the Council's financial support is an effective and efficient way to deliver services to meet identified local needs.

9.3 Programme

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Annual target to put on 400 performances with 100,000 people attending.</p>	<p>497 performances achieving a capacity of 60% (against the national Post Covid average of 48%)</p> <p>Actual audience attendance of 105,580 at the Mercury.</p> <p>In addition, we co-produced five additional shows that were either premiered with us or visited as part of their national tour.</p> <p>Audience figures for these productions were as follows:</p> <p><i>Good Luck Studio</i> – Mischief Theatre Company and Salisbury Playhouse – 22 perf/3,980 attendance <i>The Instrumentals</i> – Little Angel Theatre, Blouse and Skirt Theatre Company, Goblin Theatre – 36 perf/2,453 (to year-end – national tour continues) <i>Evelyn</i> – Wildcard Theatre Company – 31 perf/1,584 <i>Kabul Goes Pop</i> – Hightide and Brixton House – 33 perf/1,502 <i>Run Rebel</i> – Pilot Theatre, Theatre Royal York, Derby Theatre, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry – 19 perf/2,797</p> <p>Total Performances: 141 Total Audience: 12,316</p> <p>Whilst on tour, each production carries the branding of being a 'Mercury Production' co-produced by Colchester Mercury Theatre.</p>
<p>Annual target for non-ticketed performances/events to the café bar and outdoor space – 20,000</p>	<p>Total Un-ticketed Events – 368 Estimated attendance – 38,186</p> <p>The above includes our Lates Programme in our Bar/Café (including Black History Month, World Aids Day, Cocktail Cabaret, International Women's Day and various community events. In addition, the above include attendance and participation in the Jubilee Street Party, Christmas Lights Switch On Parade, Farmers Market, Street Theatre and Dance shows.</p> <p>The above excludes day and evening casual usage of the</p>

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

	Bar/Café.
Collate and report audience feedback about the artistic programme with a minimum of 60% approval rating.	<p>Customer Satisfaction Surveys are carried out regularly throughout the year and include Mercury Productions, Visiting Artists, Mercury Originals and Co-Productions.</p> <p>Customers rated the Mercury as 4.3* out of 5* (86%). This feedback is reviewed weekly.</p>
Collate and report press feedback about the artistic programme.	<p>All press reports from local, regional and national newspapers are collated. Copies are available on request.</p> <p>During the year there were 234 mentions of the Mercury in the press.</p> <p><i>The best Dame in the Country</i> - Britishtheatre.com <i>Hugely entertaining</i> - The Stage</p> <p><i>It's the kind of play that might just save theatre itself</i> - Keep Colchester Cool</p> <p><i>A remarkable achievement</i> - The Stage</p> <p>Further non-show related coverage included:</p> <p>Mercury Theatre partners with four companies to collaborate on new work https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/mercury-theatre-partners-with-four-companies-to-collaborate-on-new-work</p> <p>Mercury Theatre opens its backstage for residents to explore https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/23349704.mercury-theatre-backstage-residents-explore/</p> <p>Colchester's Firstsite and Mercury Theatre receive cash boost https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/23102344.colchesters-firstsite-mercury-theatre-receive-cash-boost/</p> <p>Mercury Theatre Livestream Pantomime to Hospices and Care Homes Across Essex https://theatreweekly.com/mercury-theatre-livestream-pantomime-hospices-and-care-homes-across-essex/</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/oct/22/its-really-desper-cost-of-living-crisis-spells-bleak-times-for-british-arts-venues</p>

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

At least 50% local audience and 50% audience supporting tourism economy.	63% of our audience was local to Colchester (within City Postcodes) and 37% from beyond Colchester (majority Essex). Proportionally this is higher than 'normal' (possibly due to the impact of the Pandemic).
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9.4 Community and Audience Development

Target	Outputs/Report
Annual target of 800 community and education sessions with 30,000 participants	36,027 children, young people and adults took part in our Creative Engagement Activities across 3,467 sessions. This was a significant increase from previous years indicating the growth of this aspect of our programme, the strength of partnership working within the community and more space in our new building able to accommodate the needs of the programme.
Maintain rate of 7% of tickets sold to disabled people and carers.	8% achieved during the year (we estimate this would have been more, however, post Covid this is an audience segment that were most nervous about returning and mixing in large groups of people).
Maintain level of accessible performances for disabled and D/deaf people – 16 performances.	27 access performances achieved during the year including for the first time in more than 10 years, two BSL interpreted shows of our panto. Performances included: Captioned, Audio Described, BSL, and Relaxed.
Maintain methods of seeking audience and user feedback 75 surveyed events per year.	An audience experience survey is conducted throughout the year following each of our Mercury Productions, Mercury Originals and Co-Produced shows. 21,816 surveys were distributed (using Purple Seven).
Become Secretariat (and re-launch) the new Colchester Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP)	During the year we have formally become the secretariat for the new Colchester LCEP (with a smooth transition from Essex Music Service). We have seconded a member of staff to the programme as the Project Co-ordinator. The LCEP has recently re-branded and in future will be known as <i>Colchester Creative</i>

	<i>Pathways.</i>
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9.5. Governance and Management

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Mercury Theatre Board of Directors to agree a new three-year business plan for the period 2022/23 and 2023 - 2026 to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Plan • Artistic Programme • Financial Projections • Cash Flow 	<p>Our new Three-Year Business Plan for the period 2023-2026 was agreed by our Board of Directors in December 2022. The plan will be reviewed annually and will be accompanied by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Plan • Artistic Programme • Annual Action Plan • Projected Budgets • Cashflow <p>The Board of Directors receive regular reports on artistic activity and review quarterly management accounts at their full meeting and our quarterly Finance and General Purposes Committee.</p> <p>In addition, the Board have established a series of ‘task and finish’ groups to review and implement aspects of our work.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Sub Committee • Marketing and Communications Committee • Evaluation and Impact Group • Staff Pay and Benefits Group
<p>Mercury Board to review and update all policy statements to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and Diversity Strategy and action plan • Digital Plan • Audience Development Plan • Risk Management • Health and Safety • Sustainability and Environmental Strategy 	<p>All policies have been reviewed during the year and approved by our Board of Directors (December 2022).</p> <p>Our Risk Register is reviewed by the Board at each of their quarterly meetings.</p> <p>Copies of all policy documents are available on request.</p>

Annual review all equality action plans and policies.	All Equality Action Plans and Policies have been reviewed and approved by our Board.
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9.6. Diversity and Access

Target	Outputs/Report
Continue to encourage more diverse audiences and participants engage with the Mercury across all equality groups. Target: 10% of audiences	We are pleased to report a continued increase in the diversity of our audiences, including: 12% - global majority 8% - disabled and D/deaf people 77% - women
Continue to ensure the Mercury recruits and attracts a diverse workforce. Target: 70% female 10% disabled 5% global majority 16% LGBT	During 2022-23, we employed a total of 143 staff. 50% - female 16% - disabled 17% - global majority 19% - LGBTQ+ In addition, we engaged 130 actors and creatives.
Continue to attract those from lower income and modest income households, proactively engaging with those from disadvantaged backgrounds and deprived areas of Colchester. Target: 10% of users and audiences	We continue to monitor audiences and users from across socio-economic backgrounds. 6% of audiences attended from deprived wards including St Anne's, St Andrew's, Greenstead, Berechurch and Shrub End. The above is data from ticketed shows and events only and excludes targeted Creative Engagement activities at the Mercury and within the community engaging low income households and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
Maintain rate of 10% all tickets sold as concessions are for young people.	16% achieved during the year.
Annual target of 800 community and education sessions with 30,000 participants	36,027 children, young people and adults took part in our Creative Engagement Activities across 3,467 sessions.

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<p>Maintain Teachers Forums for Primary and Secondary Schools.</p> <p>Target: 40 members schools</p>	<p>42 Primary and Secondary Schools remain as members of our Teacher Forum.</p> <p>With the development of the LCEP, it is envisaged that this forum will take on a more direct and strategic approach to engagement with schools.</p>
<p>Continue to create opportunities for access to the arts particularly for children and young people. This includes community involvement in Mercury Company productions and an ongoing commitment to overall community activities.</p>	<p>Opportunities created for children and young people include:</p> <p>Mercury Young Company (MYC) (38 weeks per year):</p> <p>5-8's 8-11's 11-13's 13-15's 15-17's Musical Theatre</p> <p>MYC is an integrated programme for disabled and non-disabled children and young people with Youth Assistants and Access support across all sessions.</p> <p>7-week long Half Term, Easter and Summer Holiday Programmes (including 4-week projects for SEND young people) – 102 young people</p> <p>Young People's Chorus – <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> – Panto 2022/23 (24 young people).</p> <p>Community Choir – <i>Can't Pay, Won't Pay</i> (40 adults and young people).</p> <p>Global Majority Choir – 30 adults</p>
<p>Maintain level of 150 children and young people enrolled weekly in Mercury Young Company.</p>	<p>487 children and young people participated in our Mercury Young Company across three terms during the year (38 weeks).</p>
<p>Continue to engage with senior residents through Senior Social Club, senior matinees and other specific activities.</p>	<p>83 sessions achieved during the year engaging with 1,079 older residents.</p> <p>Weekly Activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Social Club • Zumba Gold Dance Group

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	<p>Additional outreach workshops and events included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dementia Awareness Week • Panto Livestream in Care Homes and Age Concern • Christmas Music in local Care Homes • Dementia Café workshops and performances • Independent Age Dance Classes <p>Senior Matinees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 141 performances • 27,833 attendance
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9.7 Job Creation, sector skills development and contribution to the local economy

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Deliver 20 work experience placements during the year.</p>	<p>During the year we were able to offer 7 work experience placements.</p> <p>The number of placements were reduced this year due to the impact of the pandemic. We expect (from current interest) for requests to increase to 'normal' levels next year.</p>
<p>Deliver 1 apprenticeship across all areas of the Mercury and 5 internships</p>	<p>We were unable to continue our Technical Apprenticeship this year due to not being able to secure a validating college for the apprenticeship standard. We continue to search for a suitable partner.</p> <p>Again, due to the pandemic, we were only able to offer 2 paid internships this year.</p> <p>We continue to work in partnership with Colchester Institute (with whom we signed a new MOU this year) to develop further work experience and internship opportunities for young people.</p>
<p>Provide evidence and support for new and emerging regional talent and companies.</p> <p>Target: 60 participants</p>	<p>During the year we have been able to support a record 2,788 artists across our Talent Development activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playwrights • Masterclasses • 19 sharings of work in progress • 2 x week long R+D's <p>Our Mercury Creatives Programme completed its final year having supported local creatives/freelancers and entrepreneurs through mentoring, professional development workshops and an annual conference. The summary stats for the programme include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 116 individual artists or creative businesses have been supported through our mentoring programme • 124 new jobs have been created • 132 new products have been created • £2.2 million of new investment has been generated into the region to support the creative industries <p>Essex Theatre Artists Network's membership continues to grow (now 1,200).</p> <p>In addition to the above activities, we were able to support local organisations such as Colchester Fringe.</p>
<p>Target and engage with 20 volunteers during the year.</p>	<p>We have currently suspended our volunteer programme due to the challenges of the pandemic.</p> <p>We are reviewing how to offer meaningful volunteering opportunities in the future.</p>
<p>Assist CBC with other initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Night-time economy • Local employment and skills • Development of creative and cultural industries • Marketing of Colchester as a visitor destination • Town Deal Programme 	<p>The Mercury continues to work in partnership with CCC. In the past year we have assisted as follows:</p> <p>Night-time Economy Our Executive Director has taken on the Chair role for the Colchester BID Leisure Recovery Board that brings together the City Centre Leisure and Night-Time businesses monthly to formulate a future strategy for growth.</p> <p>In addition, we were a key partner in the delivery of the first Christmas Lights</p>

	<p>Switch on Parade and supply our panto characters for the Lion Walk Switch On Event.</p> <p>Local Employment and Skills The Mercury continues to work in partnership with a variety of organisations to improve local employment and skills such as:</p> <p>Kickstart Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We employed 12 local young unemployed people to receive training in Front of House, Box Office and our Bar/Café.• We host regular meetings by Essex Chambers of Commerce.• We have a regular presence at local business and employment events and fairs. This includes offering schools 'Industry Days' to visit the Mercury and see behind the scenes and meet staff to find out about their roles. This is in addition to hosting a recent Creative Careers Fair.• We retain strong partnerships with the University of Essex and Colchester Institute (with both of whom we have signed MOU's). <p>Apprenticeships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are about to commence two paid apprenticeships in our catering team in partnership with the Institute.• We continue to work closely with the Colchester Job Centre and their team and advertise all roles with them.• The Mercury already has Silver Employer Status from the Ministry of Defence for our employment of ex-service personnel and their families. We will be seeking Gold Status next year.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Mercury is the only theatre in the UK to have gained this award. <p>Development of Creative and Cultural Industries</p> <p>Creative Colchester The Mercury retains a place on Creative Colchester’s Board (our Development Director) to support their future growth).</p> <p>CCC Cultural Strategy During the year, the Mercury’s Executive Director was closely involved in developing and starting to implement the strategy.</p> <p>Mercury Creatives – the future The Mercury Creatives programme (funded by ERDF) finished at the end of the year. We are now working on fundraising to continue the programme from Autumn 2023.</p> <p>In the meantime, the programme will leave a legacy of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New searchable website of local creative businesses and freelancers.• Free resources and ‘How To’ Guides such as marketing, financial management etc). <p>Talent Development During the year (as noted above) we have continued to offer support for local artists and other creatives through workshops, master classes and making space available for sharings and research and development.</p> <p>This complements the programming of our studio where we prioritise the work of local Colchester and Essex/East based artists.</p> <p>We will continue to consolidate and expand this programme next year.</p> <p>Marketing of Colchester as a Visitor</p>
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	<p>Destination The Mercury continues to engage with Officers from across CCC about how to promote Colchester as a destination.</p> <p>Our Executive Director now sits on the <i>BID Marketing Colchester</i> Group.</p> <p>We continue to offer ticketing services for key local events such as Bonfire Night in Castle Park. The data from these events can be used to support marketing.</p> <p>Town Deal Programme We have continued to offer general support to the Town Deal Team, including:</p> <p>New Digital Centre – Queen Street Our Executive Director sits on the Board for the development of the new space.</p> <p>Development of Jumbo Our Executive Director has offered direct practical support towards the development of this important heritage asset.</p>
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9.8 Action on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Target	Outputs/Report
Review and implement new Sustainability and Environmental Policy and Action Plan.	<p>During the year we have reviewed our Sustainability Policy and created a new Action Plan for the period 2023-26.</p> <p>We have established a Sustainability Action Group of staff from all departments and levels within the organisation. This group meets monthly to review our plan and ensure actions are monitored. In addition, we have a Sustainability Champion on our Board.</p>
Collate and publish targets to reduce carbon footprint and provide evidence of improvement at regular intervals.	All environmental targets are collated through the year.
Monitor the usage of green energy.	All energy supplies are green. During the year we were successful in securing a grant from the Wolfson Foundation to install more battery storage to capture the

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	energy generated from our solar system.
Prioritise the use of local suppliers within procurement and purchasing	<p>We prioritise local suppliers across all areas of operation – in particular our bar and catering offer.</p> <p>From our recent economic impact study, we currently spend £3.9 million in the local economy.</p>

9.9 Health and Wellbeing of Colchester's communities and residents

Target	Outputs/Report
Continue to develop relationship with Colchester Refugee Action hosting joint workshops and events	<p>During the year we further developed our partnership with Colchester Refugee Action and were able to commence:</p> <p>Global Choir – a new weekly choir for refugee and asylum seekers</p> <p>Creative Meet Ups – held at the Marks Tay Hotel, our Wardrobe Team are working with refugee women and girls to make clothes using our recycled wardrobe fabric.</p> <p>Community Days – during the year we have hosted several community days with the community to allow them to visit the Mercury, have a tour backstage and participate in workshops and family activities. For the majority of participants this was their first visit to Colchester outside of the hotel and its grounds.</p>
Continue to offer dance and movement workshops for targeted community groups (Parents and Tots, Seniors, Disabled people)	<p>Due to demand we have significantly expanded our weekly workshop programme that now includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and Tots x 2 • Musical Theatre Dance x 2 • Zumba Gold x 1 • Pilates • Dance for older people • Adult Movement Class
Continue to offer workshops and after school activities for disabled children and young people	During the year we continues to offer after school workshops for schools (x 36), a monthly club night and x 3 holiday clubs.
Continue to host targeted events such as	During the year we have further

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<p>– Black History Month, World Aids Day, Diwali, International Women’s Day, Pride and Cocktail Cabaret (LGBT)</p>	<p>developed our Lates programme that are all free to attend, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black History Month Events • International Women’s Day • World Aids Day Celebration • Monthly LGBT Cocktail Cabaret • Ukrainian Benefit Night • Stand Up for Diversity Comedy Night • Family Sing-a-Long • Quiz Nights <p>In addition, we have supported Colchester Pride in their planning and event management running the Children and Family Craft Tent.</p> <p>Next year we will be starting a series of Lates events engaging with the South Asian Community.</p>
<p>Continue to partner with Essex Music Service to provide music workshops for children and young people from low income backgrounds</p>	<p>We continue to partner with Essex Music Service to offer music workshops every Saturday throughout the year (30 weeks per year – term time). These workshops offer a variety of access to learn musical instruments for low income families.</p>
<p>Continue to host and develop Senior Social Club for Elders</p>	<p>As noted above, 83 sessions achieved during the year engaging with 1,079 older residents.</p>
<p>Continue to offer Mental Health and Well-Being Workshops and sessions to local schools</p>	<p>During the year we offered 20 Mental Health and Well-Being workshops to local Colchester Schools.</p> <p>This programme was limited during the year due to Covid restrictions on visitors into schools. The programme will be reviewed prior to next year in consultation with the LCEP Membership.</p>
<p>Continue to be active members of One Colchester and Community 360 to deliver targeted programmes around Health and Well-Being</p>	<p>We continue to be active members of One Colchester and Community 360 and deliver a range of workshops and activities. Sample sessions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBT History Month – Drag Storytelling in partnership with Essex Library Service

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Storytelling and Literacy Workshops with Essex Library Service (Colchester, Greenstead, West Mersea, Prettygate, Stanway and Wivenhoe Libraries)• Monthly Drag Workshops (prior to Cocktail Cabaret)• Human Library Events with Essex Book Festival and Essex Diversity Project• Dementia friendly tours and workshops•
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9.10 How the organisation will promote the support that the Council provides during the period of the agreement

The Mercury has continued to promote the support of the Council as follows:

Partnerships

development of community, youth and educational partnerships

National Touring of Mercury Productions

ensure clear credit on all publicity and press material promoting Colchester.

Regional and National Conferences and Events

acknowledgement of support in materials and in person.

Brochures/Newsletters/Social Media/Website

ensure clear funding credit and acknowledgement in partnership with Arts Council England and Essex County Council

Press Conferences and Events (online and face to face)

ensure credit on materials and in presentations.

Annual Civic Night

annual event for Councillors and local VIP's to acknowledge the Council's support

9.11 How the organisation will contribute specifically to achieving the actions within the Colchester Cultural Strategy, and wider objectives within the Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan and other relevant local, regional or national strategies

During the year, the Mercury has:

- Continued to develop partnership working with the other NPO's and key arts, cultural and heritage organisations in the City (such as Colchester Fringe)
- Continued to work in partnership with Amphora around key events (such as the Christmas Lights Switch On).
- Worked in closed partnership with the Civic Office to support key local events such as:

- The Death of Queen Elizabeth II and becoming a formal space in the City Centre for the book of condolence.
- Contributed towards the visit of of King Charles and Camilla
- Produced 'Colchester Commemorates – the civic event to remember local people who died or who were impacted by Covid.
- Work in partnership with the Colchester BID to promote the economic recovery of the City centre.
- Work in partnership with the Council to promote tourism and the visitor economy
- Support the continued development of Creative Colchester
- Work in partnership with Colchester Borough Homes through outreach work to local care homes, activities and competitions for council house residents and hosting their annual conference.
- Continue to work in partnership with schools and other education providers (University of Essex and Colchester Institute) to provide formal and non-formal educational, learning, work experience and employment opportunities
- Work with local charities and the Job Centre to provide employment opportunities for local unemployed people
- Work in partnership with the Council to promote Climate Change and sustainability (being as founder member of the Colchester Sustainability Group and Active Travel Group).
- Work in partnership with the Council to ensure all our activities are accessible ensuring that marginalised communities and equality are at the centre of our work.
- Work in partnership with the Council to promote partnership working across the public, private and non-profit sectors.
- Our Executive Director is a Colchester Ambassador and attends regular meetings to work across all sectors to promote and embed economic regeneration.

The Mercury proactively supported the Council's Cultural Strategy during the year by:

- Work in partnership with the Town Deal to support the development of new facilities and programmes for young people (such as Greenstead)
- Produce and host site specific events to animate the public realm within the town centre and elsewhere (such as our monthly Farmers Market and other community events)
- Continue to work in partnership with the other NPO's and CCC to review and implement the Cultural Strategy
- Supported new and emerging events, festivals and artists through our programming in our studio, in our Café/Bar and elsewhere (such as Colchester Fringe, Packing Shed Theatre Company and others).
- Develop and implement shared training and capacity building for the wider cultural sector (including Diversity and Inclusion, specific skills – e.g. fundraising and event management)
- Continue to develop shared marketing and publicity opportunities to highlight and promote Colchester's culture and heritage offer
- Continue to offer and refine:
 - Talent Development Programmes
 - Apprenticeship Programme
 - Volunteer Programme

Funding Agreement between Colchester City Council and The Mercury Theatre

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Colchester's vibrant cultural sector is one of the city's key strengths and something that Colchester City Council (CCC) aims to support and sustain, working with partners to align policy and funding to help deliver key social and economic outcomes through investment in the arts.
- 1.2 As established Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) Colchester Arts Centre (CAC), The Mercury Theatre and Firstsite are key partners, together providing leadership, capacity, and innovative programmes of delivery that contribute to making Colchester a great place to live, learn, work and visit.
- 1.3 CCC provides core revenue grants to these organisations under the Strategic Arts Partner programme: to enable them to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan and actions within the [Cultural Strategy for Colchester](#); support Creative Colchester, a partnership for furthering and enhancing the impact of the arts and creative industries on the local economy; and to contribute to initiatives which help reduce inequalities and support health, wellbeing and community cohesion across the City area.
- 1.4 As part of the Council's commitment to transparency, quality and performance management systems, the organisations that receive CCC funding must set out clear objectives and provide performance and sector data so that the service provided through partnership working can be measured, evaluated and improved. This document defines the annual performance objectives and monitoring process, and confirms the funding amounts currently agreed.

2.0 Scope and Financial Arrangements

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, the Council will fund the Mercury Theatre to the amount of £168,175. This is a funding settlement agreed by Cabinet in line with budget strategy to support the core operations of the organisation, as set out in the business and operations plan and to meet the targets for performance set out in section 9 of this Agreement.
- 2.2 Upon signature of this Agreement, the Council will release the funding in quarterly instalments.
- 2.3 Any financial investment that the Council needs to make under its obligations as the owner of the theatre buildings is deemed to be outside of this agreement. However, any tenant responsibilities that the Mercury Theatre holds are considered to be within this agreement.
- 2.4 On signing this Agreement, the Mercury Theatre recognises that it is in receipt of public funding and accepts responsibility for showing proof of eligibility,

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meetings the targets for performance, and collecting qualitative and quantitative performance data to provide evidence of the service standards. The Theatre also agreed to provide available sector data to assist with monitoring and performance assessment.

- 2.5 Where appropriate and possible within current resources, Colchester City Council will provide non-financial support to the Mercury Theatre where it seeks to develop additional services that contribute towards meeting the Council's strategic priorities. If these additional services are developed to a point that requires additional funding, the Mercury Theatre may request such funding formally, and the Council may issue a separate funding agreement if applicable. If this circumstance arises, the services will be deemed to fall outside of this agreement.

3.0 Eligibility and Criteria for Acceptance

- 3.1 In order to be eligible for funding the Mercury Theatre must supply evidence to demonstrate that it is:
- a. Properly constituted
 - b. Financially viable
 - c. Able to manage its work effectively, monitor and manage risk, and seek necessary professional financial, legal and insurance advice
 - d. Operating with effective policies and procedures in equal opportunities, health and safety, equality and diversity, access, and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - e. Delivering on the current strategic priorities of the Council.

4.0 Performance monitoring framework

- 4.1 The Mercury Theatre must submit an up to date Business Plan and operations information to CCC, including a budget to cover the same period as the funding agreement and a copy of the audited accounts from 2022-23 when available.
- 4.2 As a minimum throughout the term of the agreement, the Mercury Theatre must submit quarterly budget reports if required and invite a Council representative to observe Board meetings if appropriate. The organisation will also participate in an annual review meeting, as outlined below.
- 4.3 At the end of the agreement period, the organisation must provide audited accounts and submit performance data to evidence the organisation's turnover, audience and participation levels as well as contribution to the Council's strategic priorities.

5.0 Annual review process

- 5.1 A review meeting will take place between Colchester City Council and Mercury Theatre at least once during the period of the agreement. The meetings shall be attended by the Portfolio Holder (PFH), relevant officer(s) of the Council and Executive staff of the Mercury Theatre.

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5.2 The Portfolio Holder and the Executive Director of the Mercury Theatre may be asked to sit before the CCC Scrutiny Panel to monitor performance and achievements. As such, the annual review process should be seen as an opportunity to ensure that the Portfolio Holder can evidence performance within their area of responsibility.

6.0 Acknowledgement of funding

6.1 The Mercury Theatre will acknowledge its financial assistance from CCC in all marketing and communication materials in print, electronic, broadcast and other formats.

6.2 The organisation is asked to specify particular steps that it will take within the period of this Agreement to promote the support that it receives from the Council in Section 9.

7.0 General conditions

7.1 The funding provided under this agreement may not be assigned to any other person, association or company other than in the course of delivering the Business Plan and agreed performance targets.

7.2 This agreement does not constitute the Mercury Theatre as an agent of the Council or otherwise make the Council liable to any person who may take proceedings against the Theatre.

7.3 The Council reserves the right to nominate annually a councillor to be a director on the Mercury Theatre Board.

7.4 Funds will be repayable in full to the Council in the event of any of the following:

- i. Misuse of payment received from the Council by Mercury Theatre
- ii. A breach of the law by Mercury Theatre
- iii. Petitioning the court for the appointment of an administrator
- iv. Having a receiver appointed over all or any part of the Theatre's assets
- v. Being the subject of a petition or resolution for the Mercury Theatre's 'winding up'

7.5 The Council should be consulted where any change or development in the direction of the organisation's affairs might affect this Agreement.

8.0 Breach in agreement

8.1 In the event of either the Council or the Mercury Theatre notifying the other in writing of a breach in this agreement, the parties shall meet to discuss the alleged breach within 21 days.

8.2 Both the Council and the Mercury Theatre agree that they have an equal responsibility to reach a practical and reasonable solution to the breach, but if after 12 weeks a solution has not been agreed then the parties mutually agree to arbitration.

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9.0 Specification of performance targets

9.1 The specification of performance targets is developed collaboratively between the Council and the Mercury Theatre. The information provided here substantiates the Council's decision to invest public funds and helps to strengthen the partnership delivery model.

9.2 The information is set out to help to convey to Members, officers and partners how the Council's annual grant supports the Strategic Arts Partner organisation to operate effectively, deliver to residents and to contribute to wider strategic aims

9.3 Programme and Performance

Target	Outputs/Report
Annual target to put on 369 performances with 90,000 people attending.	
Annual target for non-ticketed performances/events to the café bar and outdoor space – 20,000 .	
Collate and report audience feedback about the artistic programme with a minimum of 60% approval rating.	
Collate and report media feedback about the artistic programme.	
At least 50% local audience and 50% audience supporting tourism economy.	

9.4 Community and Audience Development

Target	Outputs/Report
Annual target of 724 community and education sessions with 21,000 participants.	
Maintain rate of 7% of tickets sold to disabled people and carers.	
Maintain level of accessible performances for disabled and D/deaf people – 10 performances.	
Maintain methods of seeking audience and user feedback 75 surveyed events per year.	

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Continue to be the Secretariat for <i>Colchester Creative Pathways</i> . (LCEP).	
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9.5. Governance and Management

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Mercury Theatre Board of Directors to continue to implement and review a new three-year business plan for the period 2023 - 2026 to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Plan • Artistic Programme • Financial Projections • Cash Flow 	
<p>Mercury Board to review and update all policy statements annually, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and Diversity Strategy and action plan • Digital Plan • Audience Development Plan • Risk Management • Health and Safety • Sustainability and Environmental Strategy 	
<p>Annual review all equality action plans and policies.</p>	

9.6. Diversity and Access

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Continue to encourage more diverse audiences and participants engage with the Mercury across all equality groups.</p> <p>Target: 10% of audiences.</p>	
<p>Continue to ensure the Mercury recruits and attracts a diverse workforce.</p> <p>Target:</p> <p>70% female 10% disabled 5% global majority 16% LGBT.</p>	

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Continue to attract those from lower income and modest income households, proactively engaging with those from disadvantaged backgrounds and deprived areas of Colchester. Target: 10% of users and audiences.	
Continue to engage with senior residents through Senior Social Club, senior matinees and other specific activities.	

9.7 Job Creation, sector skills development and contribution to the local economy

Target	Outputs/Report
Deliver 10 work experience placements during the year.	
Deliver 2 apprenticeship across all areas of the Mercury and 3 internships.	
Provide evidence and support for new and emerging regional talent and companies. Target: 80 participants	

9.8 Children and Young People

Target	Outputs/Report
Maintain rate of 10% all tickets sold as concessions for young people.	
Continue to create opportunities for access to the arts particularly for children and young people. This includes community involvement in Mercury Company productions and an ongoing commitment to overall community activities.	
Maintain level of 266 children and young people enrolled weekly in Mercury Young Company and holiday activities.	
Maintain Teachers Forums for Primary and Secondary Schools.	

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Target: 40 members schools.	
Continue to partner with Essex Music Service to provide term-time music workshops for children and young people from low income backgrounds.	

9.9 Action on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Target	Outputs/Report
Review and implement new Sustainability and Environmental Policy and Action Plan.	
Collate and publish targets to reduce carbon footprint and provide evidence of improvement at regular intervals.	
Monitor the usage of green energy.	
Prioritise the use of local suppliers within procurement and purchasing.	
Continue to implement The national <i>Green Book</i> standard within the performing arts industry.	

9.10 Health and Wellbeing of Colchester's communities and residents

Target	Outputs/Report
Continue to develop relationship with Colchester Refugee Action hosting joint workshops and events.	
Continue to offer dance and movement workshops for targeted community groups (Parents and Tots, Seniors, Disabled people).	
Aim to offer workshops and after school activities for disabled children and young people. <i>This programme is subject to additional funding being secured due to the ending of ECC contract (31/3/23).</i>	
Continue to host targeted events such as – Black History Month, World Aids Day, Diwali, International Women's Day, Pride	

and Cocktail Cabaret (LGBT).	
Continue to host and develop Senior Social Club for Elders	
Continue to offer Mental Health and Well-Being Workshops and sessions to local schools.	
Continue to be active members of One Colchester and Community 360 to deliver targeted programmes around Health and Well-Being.	

9.11 How the organisation is applying the Social Value Model:

The Mercury is applying the Social Value Model as follows and will continue to offer programming and events that positively reflect and address the needs of our residents:

1. Covid Recovery

We continue to support our community partners (Community 360 etc) with their programmes to enable our residents to recover from the impact of Covid through our membership of One Colchester. This includes workshops and physical activities with those people impacted by long-covid and other conditions.

2. Economic InEquality

The current cost of living crisis has impacted our audiences and users substantially. We have reviewed our ticket pricing and have reduced our entry level ticket price and made additional standby tickets available from £7 on the day of a performance. Alongside ticketing, we have fundraised to ensure more bursary places are available for children, young people and those on low incomes can access our workshops and classes.

Last Winter we became a registered ‘warm space’ for residents with discount food and hot drinks. We will offer this once again next Winter if required.

We continue to ensure all of our Lates Programme in our bar/café are free for audiences.

In addition to the above, we target our outreach and community engagement programme to work with those with least access to the arts and culture.

3. Climate Change

We are proud to be the most sustainable building in Colchester. We will continue to strive to reach net zero through careful management of our facilities and programme.

We are continuing to implement the national standard – The Green Book – that offers support to ensure that producing and touring work is as sustainable as possible.

The Mercury retains its membership of Julie’s Bicycle and is able to access bench-mark data for the sector to compare our work to other similar sized venues.

We will continue to embrace new technologies that enables us to reduce our carbon footprint (for example such as the installation of additional batteries to store the solar energy generated).

4. Equal Opportunity

We will continue to be a proud equal opportunities employer during the year across our permanent staff and ensuring that our casting is integrated.

We strive to ensure our programme is accessible to everyone across all protected characteristics. This includes programming events and shows that support and profile particular communities including the LGBTQ community, women, a new Lates series of events with the South Asian Community, older people and our work with those from the Global Majority.

5. Wellbeing

As noted above from our activities last year we will continue to offer workshops and activities at the Mercury, in schools and other community settings that encourage health and wellbeing (such as dance with older people, activities for SEND children and young people) and community choirs.

We actively support our own staff's health and well-being and are active members of Parents in Performing Arts (PIPA) offering flexible working for parents and those with caring responsibilities and support for staff through trained Mental Health First Aiders.

We have a staff Wellbeing Committee that offers a forum for feedback and monitoring of all of our policies and procedures.

Finally, we have established a Staff Hardship Fund offering small grants to those facing significant financial challenges (due to the cost of living or other life event) and access to interest free loans.

9.10 How the organisation will promote the support that the Council provides during the period of the agreement:

The Mercury will continue to promote the support of the Council as follows:

Partnerships

Development of community, youth and educational partnerships across the City, County and region.

National Touring of Mercury Productions

Ensure clear credit on all publicity and press material promoting Colchester.

Regional and National Conferences and Events

Acknowledgement of support in materials and in person.

Brochures/Newsletters/Social Media/Website

Ensure clear funding credit and acknowledgement in partnership with Arts Council England and Essex County Council.

Press Conferences and Events (online and face to face)

Ensure credit on materials and in presentations.

Annual Civic Night

Annual event for Councillors and local VIP's to acknowledge the Council's support

9.12 How the organisation will contribute specifically to achieving actions within the Colchester Cultural Strategy, wider objectives within the Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan and other relevant local, regional or national strategies:

During the year, the Mercury will continue to:

- Develop partnership working with the other NPO's and key arts, cultural and heritage organisations in the City (such as Colchester Fringe)
- Support Colchester achieving City Status through contributing to the Year of Celebration and leading on a legacy project engaging young people with the aim of putting their voices at the heart of future developments.
- Work in partnership with Amphora around key events (such as the Christmas Lights Switch On).
- Work in close partnership with the Civic Office to support key local events.
- Work in partnership with the Colchester BID to promote the economic recovery of the City centre.
- Work in partnership with the Council to promote tourism and the visitor economy.
- Support the continued development of Creative Colchester.
- Work in partnership with Colchester Borough Homes through outreach work to local care homes, activities and competitions for residents and hosting their annual conference.
- Work in partnership with schools and other education providers (University of Essex and Colchester Institute) to provide formal and non-formal educational, learning, work experience and employment opportunities.
- Work with local charities and the Job Centre to provide employment opportunities for local unemployed people.
- Work in partnership with the Council to promote Climate Change and sustainability (as a founder member of the Colchester Sustainability Group and Active Travel Group).
- Work in partnership with the Council to ensure all our activities are accessible ensuring that marginalised communities and equality are at the centre of our work.
- Work in partnership with the Council to promote partnership working across the public, private and non-profit sectors (e.g. through working with the Colchester BID).
- Our Executive Director is a Colchester Ambassador and attends regular meetings to work across all sectors to promote and embed economic regeneration.

The Mercury will continue to develop the Cultural Strategy by:

- As above support the development of Creative Colchester and host the secretariat of Colchester Creative Pathways, the Local Cultural Educational Partnership (LCEP) for Colchester City area.
- Working in partnership with the Town Deal to support the development of new facilities and programmes for young people (such as Greenstead).
- Produce and host site specific events to animate the public realm within the town centre and elsewhere (such as our monthly Farmers Market and other

community events).

- Working in partnership with the other NPO's and CCC to review and implement the Cultural Strategy.
- Supported new and emerging events, festivals and artists through programming in our studio, in our Café/Bar and elsewhere (such as Colchester Fringe, Packing Shed Theatre Company and others).
- Developing and implementing shared training and capacity building for the wider cultural sector (including Diversity and Inclusion, specific skills – e.g. fundraising and event management).
- Developing shared marketing and publicity opportunities to highlight and promote Colchester's culture and heritage offer.
- Offering:
 - Talent Development Programmes
 - Apprenticeship Programme
 - Volunteer Programme
- Re-Launch our Mercury Creatives Programme to support freelancers, artists and those working in the creative industries (subject to additional funding for the period September 2023 – August 2026).

Funding Agreement between Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Arts Centre

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Colchester's vibrant cultural sector is one of the Borough's unique selling points and something that Colchester Borough Council (CBC) aims to support and sustain, working with partners to align policy and funding to help deliver key social and economic outcomes through investment in the arts.
- 1.2 As Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) Colchester Arts Centre (CAC), The Mercury Theatre and Firstsite are key partners, together providing leadership, capacity, and innovative programmes of delivery that contribute to making Colchester a great place to live, learn, work and visit.
- 1.3 CBC provides core revenue grants to these organisations under the Strategic Arts Partner programme; to enable them to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan and specifically the actions within the new [Cultural Strategy for Colchester](#); support Creative Colchester, a framework for enhancing the impact of the arts and creative industries on the local economy; and contribute to initiatives which help reduce inequalities and which support health, wellbeing and community cohesion across the Borough.
- 1.4 As part of the Council's commitment to transparency, quality and performance management systems, the organisations that receive CBC funding must set out clear objectives and provide performance and sector data so that the service provided through partnership working can be measured, evaluated and improved. This document defines the performance targets and monitoring process and confirms the funding amounts currently agreed.

2.0 Scope and Financial Arrangements

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, the Council will fund Colchester Arts Centre to the amount of £48,175. This is a funding settlement agreed by Cabinet in line with budget strategy to support the core operations of the organisation, as set out in the business plan and to meet the targets for performance set out in section 9 of this Agreement.
- 2.2 Upon signature of this Agreement, the Council will release the funding in quarterly instalments.
- 2.3 Any financial investment that the Council needs to make under its obligations as the lease holder of the building is deemed to be outside of this agreement. However, any tenant responsibilities that CAC holds are considered to be within this agreement.

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

- 2.4 On signing this Agreement, CAC recognises that it is in receipt of public funding and accepts responsibility for showing proof of eligibility, meeting the targets for performance, and collecting qualitative and quantitative performance data to provide evidence of the service standards. CAC also agrees to provide available sector data to assist with monitoring and performance assessment.
- 2.5 Where appropriate and possible within current resources, Colchester Borough Council will provide non-financial support to CAC where it seeks to develop additional services that contribute towards meeting the Council's strategic priorities. If these additional services are developed to a point that requires additional funding, CAC may request such funding formally, and the Council may issue a separate funding agreement if applicable. If this circumstance arises, the services will be deemed to fall outside of this agreement.

3.0 Eligibility and Criteria for Acceptance

- 3.1 In order to be eligible for funding CAC must supply evidence to demonstrate that it is:
 - a. Properly constituted
 - b. Financially viable
 - c. Able to manage its work effectively, monitor and manage risk, and seek necessary professional financial, legal and insurance advice
 - d. Operating with effective policies and procedures in equal opportunities, health and safety, equality and diversity, access, and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - e. Delivering on the current strategic priorities of the Council.

4.0 Performance monitoring framework

- 4.1 CAC must submit an up to date Business Plan and operations information to CBC, including a budget to cover the same period as the funding agreement and a copy of the audited accounts from 2021 – 22 when available.
- 4.2 As a minimum throughout the term of the agreement, CAC must submit quarterly budget reports if required and invite a Council representative to observe Board meetings if appropriate. The organisation will also participate in an annual review meeting, as outlined below.
- 4.3 At the end of the agreement period, the organisation must provide audited accounts and submit performance data to evidence the organisation's turnover, audience and participation levels as well as contribution to the Council's strategic priorities.

5.0 Annual review process

- 5.1 A review meeting will take place between Colchester Borough Council and CAC at least once during the period of the agreement. The meetings shall be attended by the Portfolio Holder (PFH), relevant officer(s) of the Council and the Director of CAC.

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

- 5.2 The Portfolio Holder and the Director of CAC may be asked to sit before the Scrutiny Panel to monitor performance and achievements. As such, the annual review process should be seen as an opportunity to ensure that the Portfolio Holder can evidence performance within their area of responsibility.

6.0 Acknowledgement of funding

- 6.1 CAC will acknowledge its financial assistance from CBC in all marketing and communication materials in print, electronic, broadcast and other formats.
- 6.2 The organisation is asked to specify particular steps that it will take within the period of this Agreement to promote the support that it receives from the Council in Section 9.

7.0 General conditions

- 7.1 The funding provided under this agreement may not be assigned to any other person, association or company other than in the course of delivering the Business Plan and agreed performance targets.
- 7.2 This agreement does not constitute CAC as an agent of the Council or otherwise make the Council liable to any person who may take proceedings against the Colchester Arts Centre.
- 7.3 The Council reserves the right to nominate annually a councillor to be a director on the CAC Board.
- 7.4 Funds will be repayable in full to the Council in the event of any of the following:
- i. Misuse of payment received from the Council by CAC
 - ii. A breach of the law by CAC
 - iii. Petitioning the court for the appointment of an administrator
 - iv. Having a receiver appointed over all or any part of CAC's assets
 - v. Being the subject of a petition or resolution for CAC's 'winding up'
- 7.5 The Council should be consulted where any change or development in the direction of the organisation's affairs might affect this Agreement.

8.0 Breach in agreement

- 8.1 In the event of either the Council or the Colchester Arts Centre notifying the other in writing of a breach in this agreement, the parties shall meet to discuss the alleged breach within 21 days.
- 8.2 Both the Council and CAC agree that they have an equal responsibility to reach a practical and reasonable solution to the breach, but if after 12 weeks a solution has not been agreed then the parties mutually agree to arbitration.

9.0 Specification of performance targets

- 9.1 The specification of performance targets is developed collaboratively between the Council and the Colchester Arts Centre. The information provided here

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

substantiates the Council's decision to invest public funds and helps to strengthen the partnership delivery model.

- 9.2 The information is set out in line with the Strategic Plan to help to convey to Members, officers and partners how the Council's financial support is an effective and efficient way to deliver services to meet local identified needs.

9.3 Programme

Target	Outputs/Report	
<p>Colchester Arts Centre will promote, present and nurture artistic talent. Through a combination of curatorial expertise, outstanding production values and straightforward commercial nous it will act as a home for artists, a breeding ground for artistic ambition and innovation, and a platform for local, national and international talent. With its broad ranging and risk-taking performance programme the venue will seek to inspire and nurture creativity in the local community, inspiring artists already on the path and encouraging others to embrace their creativity.</p> <p>Target: In 2022/23 we will present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One piece of international work. • One major partnership project. • Twelve jazz performances • Thirty Folk gigs • Forty Rock / Indie / Pop gigs • Forty Comedy Shows • Twenty shows specifically for children. • Five Film screenings • Ten Experimental Music Performances 	<p>Actuals Variance</p> <p>9 -3</p> <p>29 -1</p> <p>83 43</p> <p>45 5</p> <p>21 1</p> <p>12 7</p> <p>15 5</p>	
<p>Wonderful Wednesdays – New, challenging, experimental, innovative performance work, made accessible for a regular Colchester audience with a radical pay what you can afford admission structure that makes this work, often regarded as the preserve of the arts elite, truly open to anyone. Personally curated by the Director.</p> <p>Target: 20 performances in the funding period.</p>	<p>21 performances</p>	

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

<p>A dedicated programme of Childrens' Shows and Workshops –All show tickets kept at a low, accessible, affordable price.</p> <p>Target: 20 Shows and 5 workshops, including a run of special Christmas shows at an accessibly low admission price.</p>	<p>21 performances Tickets between £3 - £10 No workshops 16 christmas shows (included in the 21) Family ticket applied where possible.</p>
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9.4 Community and Audience Development

Target	Outputs/Report												
<p>Community Events – we commit to program a number of events focusing on the talents of the local community including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Colchester Schools Rock prom • Sixth Form College Battle of the Bands • Variety Night in aid of Mayor's Charities • A Colchester Games Fair <p>Showcase events from Colchester based dance and music schools</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>24/02/2023</td> <td>173 tickets</td> <td>£5 per ticket</td> </tr> <tr> <td>08/02/2023</td> <td>118 tickets</td> <td>£6 per ticket</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11/03/2023</td> <td>179 tickets</td> <td>£10 per ticket</td> </tr> <tr> <td>22/10/2022</td> <td>350 attended</td> <td>Free admission</td> </tr> </table>	24/02/2023	173 tickets	£5 per ticket	08/02/2023	118 tickets	£6 per ticket	11/03/2023	179 tickets	£10 per ticket	22/10/2022	350 attended	Free admission
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<p>Increase known audience attendance to 35,000</p>	<p>Paying attendees 40,020</p>												
<p>Online audience figures This to include the Colchester Arts Centre website and our social media platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase website Unique Browsers to 150,000 • Increase number of website page impressions from 765,000 • Increase number of website visits to 300,000 • Increase Facebook follows to 14,000 <p>Increase Twitter followers to 14000</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>221,432</td> </tr> <tr> <td>784,961</td> </tr> <tr> <td>332,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14,411</td> </tr> </table>	221,432	784,961	332,000	14,411								
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Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

9.5. Governance and Management

Target	Outputs/Report
Arts Centre Board: Organise a further Board retreat.	In progress
Senior Management Team The creation of this grouping to work closely with the Director on all aspects, particularly Business Plan creation and setting of targets. 1 meeting per month.	Met

9.6. Diversity and Access

Target	Outputs/Report
Arts Centre Board: Increase BAME representation.	Met
Accessible Shows – we will program specific performances made accessible to people with disabilities, beyond our regular venue accessibility offer. Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten relaxed performances • An audio described performance • Ten BSL interpreted performances. 	12 6 6
Staff Training – to be ongoing. Targets: Disability Equality Training for Core staff and volunteers. LGBTQIA++ training for staff and volunteers.	Met
Increase Diversity of Artistic Programme – encouraging diversity to permeate all levels of the organisation, not just within the staff. Target: work with 5 artists with disabilities, 5 LGBTQIA++ artists and 5 BAME artists.	Met
Additional Guest curation by our Thinker In residence Vijay Patel.	Met

9.7 Job Creation, sector skills development and contribution to the local economy

Target	Outputs/Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update commercial sponsorship brochure and online. 	In progress

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAC Representative to attend 4 Business networking events per year. 	Met (One Colchester Strategic Board)
<p>Volunteers – Volunteering, whilst hugely aiding the operation of the arts centre, also provides a valuable opportunity for work experience and skills development.</p> <p>Target: Increase volunteer numbers by 5% for future-proofing</p>	Met - Increased pool of volunteers
<p>Work Experience – we will provide work experience to secondary school aged students and those seeking internships to cement their skills and experience.</p>	In progress

9.8 Action on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Julie's Bicycle – we will continue our work with this organisation to establish measurement data for use in setting green targets.</p>	Met
<p>Green Team – meeting monthly to improve green credentials across the organisation. Research into wider aspects of Climate Change. Empirical analysis of data to identify areas in which we can make the biggest impact.</p> <p>Waste and Energy Management – regular review of best practice: we commit to constant monitoring of cost effectiveness and green credentials.</p>	Met Met (Green Team)
<p>Car sharing pilot scheme.</p>	Met
<p>Mapping the ecology of our neighbouring graveyard and planning associated public events.</p>	Met (Mapping) https://www.mary-mary-quite-contrary.com Public events – Not met at this time

9.9 Health and Wellbeing of Colchester's communities and residents

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Meditation Workshops open to the public.</p>	Not met at this time
<p>Doom Yoga – combining art and wellbeing! Yoga performed to</p>	Not met at this time

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

entrancing (and very loud) doom / drone music!	
Use of space for “reflection time” – a chance to be in the space alone.	Not met at this time

9.10 How the organisation will promote the support that the Council provides during the period of the agreement

We acknowledge CBC funding support in our quarterly Events Guide, distributed across the Borough and direct mailed to approximately 20,000 mailing list subscribers.

Funding acknowledgement on website and through social media via re-tweets, facebook re-posts etc.

MET

9.11 How the organisation will contribute specifically to achieving the actions within the Colchester Cultural Strategy, and wider objectives within the Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan and other relevant local, regional or national strategies

Colchester Cultural Strategy

We can contribute in these specific areas...

Build on existing sectoral and cross sector partnership working and collaboration

Membership of Creative Colchester and LCEP

Co-produced events with Firstsite in aid of the Mayors Charities.

MET

Collaborate on a shared diversity and inclusion training programme across cultural organisations

Colchester Arts Centre would be delighted to invite other NPOs and organisations in the town to share in our disability and equality training sessions.

INVITATIONS ISSUED

Make the most of the public realm and create opportunity for art and heritage outside of cultural venues and museum

We will make use of nearby public space with our Graveyard Ecology project and events. We will also seek to bring art to less engaged local communities with our Art Bus (a converted London Routemaster Bus).

NOT MET AT THIS TIME

Seek to improve the availability and accessibility of ancillary music industry infrastructure (e.g., record and equipment stores), studios (rehearsal, recording) and venues

We already make the space available to up and coming bands for use in video recordings, sound recording and rehearsal. This is available to them at a reduced cost rate. We will increase the number of “grass roots” events for local bands. We continue to champion the inclusion of local bands as support acts for the established touring acts and make it a condition of booking where possible.

MET

Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan

Colchester Arts Centre contributes to the following items in the Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan:

Respond to the Climate Emergency

Discussing wider Green issues at our regular Green team meetings. The venue has decided to go paperless (no paper invoicing, minutes or any other documents that can be otherwise digitally stored), Plastic Free (all disposable plastic removed from venue – reusable plastic cups used on bars that have a printed QR code which links to our Green Policy page on our website), involvement in initiatives such as Colchester Travel Plan Club, Cable Guys (cable recycling), and more. Recent venue refurbishments have introduced toilets that recycle waste water from hand basins, LED lighting throughout providing huge energy savings and solar panels are currently under consideration.

ALL MET (Green Team)

Conserve and enhance biodiversity

2022/23 sees continued projects in our Graveyard, documenting the flora and fauna, exploring ways to promote life and minimise our impact on the environment. Floral Hanging baskets now in place outside the venue.

IN PROGRESS

Tackle the causes of inequality and support our most vulnerable people

Reduced concessions ticket prices are available on most events. Trialling a “no one turned away for lack of funds” on some events where free entry can be obtained for those experiencing hardship. Wonderful Wednesdays performance season continues to have a pay what you can admission structure which can be anything from £15 to £0 – guilt free. Christmas family panto with low pricing so the whole family can enjoy a Christmas treat at an affordable price. Providing entertainment for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties with the engagement of trailblazing theatre group Frozen Light and others, who make astonishing work exclusively for this demographic. Our refurbished London Routemaster Bus will take work on the road and deliver it into the heart of areas of low arts engagement to reach those most in need.

MET

Provide opportunities for young people

We provide Work Experience placements for secondary school age students, and participate in apprenticeship schemes. Many young bands have performed at the

Schools Rock Prom and Sixth Form Battle of the Bands events, some of them going on to be support band to headliners in the regular programme.

NOT MET AT THIS TIME

Protect, enhance and celebrate Colchester's unique heritage

We are enthusiastic participants in Heritage Open Day, with guided tours by our Director and the entire building opened up to the public. The recent venue refurbishment has retained and sought to compliment the original architectural features, and preserve the story of the building in readiness for its next chapter.

MET

Funding Agreement between Colchester City Council and Colchester Arts Centre

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Colchester's vibrant cultural sector is one of the city's key strengths and something that Colchester City Council (CCC) aims to support and sustain, working with partners to align policy and funding to help deliver key social and economic outcomes through investment in the arts.
- 1.2 As established Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) Colchester Arts Centre (CAC), The Mercury Theatre and Firstsite are key partners, together providing leadership, capacity, and innovative programmes of delivery that contribute to making Colchester a great place to live, learn, work and visit.
- 1.3 CCC provides core revenue grants to these organisations under the Strategic Arts Partner programme: to enable them to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan and actions within the [Cultural Strategy for Colchester](#); support Creative Colchester, a partnership for furthering and enhancing the impact of the arts and creative industries on the local economy; and to contribute to initiatives which help reduce inequalities and support health, wellbeing and community cohesion across the City area.
- 1.4 As part of the Council's commitment to transparency, quality and performance management systems, the organisations that receive CCC funding must set out clear objectives and provide performance and sector data so that the service provided through partnership working can be measured, evaluated and improved. This document defines the annual performance objectives and monitoring process, and confirms the funding amounts currently agreed.

2.0 Scope and Financial Arrangements

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, the Council will fund Colchester Arts Centre to the amount of £48,175. This is a funding settlement agreed by Cabinet in line with budget strategy to support the core operations of the organisation, as set out in the business plan and to meet the targets for performance set out in section 9 of this Agreement.
- 2.2 Upon signature of this Agreement, the Council will release the funding in quarterly instalments.
- 2.3 Any financial investment that the Council needs to make under its obligations as the lease holder of the building is deemed to be outside of this agreement. However, any tenant responsibilities that CAC holds are considered to be within this agreement.

Colchester City Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2023/24

- 2.4 On signing this Agreement, CAC recognises that it is in receipt of public funding and accepts responsibility for showing proof of eligibility, meeting the targets for performance, and collecting qualitative and quantitative performance data to provide evidence of the service standards. CAC also agrees to provide available sector data to assist with monitoring and performance assessment.
- 2.5 Where appropriate and possible within current resources, Colchester City Council will provide non-financial support to CAC where it seeks to develop additional services that contribute towards meeting the Council's strategic priorities. If these additional services are developed to a point that requires additional funding, CAC may request such funding formally, and the Council may issue a separate funding agreement if applicable. If this circumstance arises, the services will be deemed to fall outside of this agreement.

3.0 Eligibility and Criteria for Acceptance

- 3.1 In order to be eligible for funding CAC must supply evidence to demonstrate that it is:
 - a. Properly constituted
 - b. Financially viable
 - c. Able to manage its work effectively, monitor and manage risk, and seek necessary professional financial, legal and insurance advice
 - d. Operating with effective policies and procedures in equal opportunities, health and safety, equality and diversity, access, and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - e. Delivering on the current strategic priorities of the Council.

4.0 Performance monitoring framework

- 4.1 CAC must submit an up to date Business Plan and operations information to CCC, including a budget to cover the same period as the funding agreement and a copy of the audited accounts from 2022 – 23 when available.
- 4.2 As a minimum throughout the term of the agreement, CAC must submit quarterly budget reports if required and invite a Council representative to observe Board meetings if appropriate. The organisation will also participate in an annual review meeting, as outlined below.
- 4.3 At the end of the agreement period, the organisation must provide audited accounts and submit performance data to evidence the organisation's turnover, audience and participation levels as well as contribution to the Council's strategic priorities.

5.0 Annual review process

- 5.1 A review meeting will take place between Colchester City Council and CAC at least once during the period of the agreement. The meetings shall be attended by the Portfolio Holder (PFH), relevant officer(s) of the Council and the Director of CAC.

- 5.2 The Portfolio Holder and the Director of CAC may be asked to sit before the CCC Scrutiny Panel to monitor performance and achievements. As such, the annual review process should be seen as an opportunity to ensure that the Portfolio Holder can evidence performance within their area of responsibility.

6.0 Acknowledgement of funding

- 6.1 CAC will acknowledge its financial assistance from CCC in all marketing and communication materials in print, electronic, broadcast and other formats.
- 6.2 The organisation is asked to specify particular steps that it will take within the period of this Agreement to promote the support that it receives from the Council in Section 9.

7.0 General conditions

- 7.1 The funding provided under this agreement may not be assigned to any other person, association or company other than in the course of delivering the Business Plan and agreed performance targets.
- 7.2 This agreement does not constitute CAC as an agent of the Council or otherwise make the Council liable to any person who may take proceedings against the Colchester Arts Centre.
- 7.3 The Council reserves the right to nominate annually a councillor to be a director on the CAC Board.
- 7.4 Funds will be repayable in full to the Council in the event of any of the following:
- i. Misuse of payment received from the Council by CAC
 - ii. A breach of the law by CAC
 - iii. Petitioning the court for the appointment of an administrator
 - iv. Having a receiver appointed over all or any part of CAC's assets
 - v. Being the subject of a petition or resolution for CAC's 'winding up'
- 7.5 The Council should be consulted where any change or development in the direction of the organisation's affairs might affect this Agreement.

8.0 Breach in agreement

- 8.1 In the event of either the Council or the Colchester Arts Centre notifying the other in writing of a breach in this agreement, the parties shall meet to discuss the alleged breach within 21 days.
- 8.2 Both the Council and CAC agree that they have an equal responsibility to reach a practical and reasonable solution to the breach, but if after 12 weeks a solution has not been agreed then the parties mutually agree to arbitration.

9.0 Specification of performance targets

Colchester City Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2023/24

- 9.1 The specification of performance targets is developed collaboratively between the Council and the Colchester Arts Centre. The information provided here substantiates the Council's decision to invest public funds and helps to strengthen the partnership delivery model.
- 9.2 The information is set out to help to convey to Members, officers and partners how the Council's annual grant supports the Strategic Arts Partner organisation to operate effectively, deliver to residents and to contribute to wider strategic aims

9.3 Programme and Performance

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Colchester Arts Centre will promote, present and nurture artistic talent. Through a combination of curatorial expertise, outstanding production values and straightforward commercial nous it will act as a home for artists, a breeding ground for artistic ambition and innovation, and a platform for local, national and international talent. With its broad ranging and risk-taking performance programme the venue will seek to inspire and nurture creativity in the local community, inspiring artists already on the path and encouraging others to embrace their creativity.</p> <p>Target: In 2023/24 we will present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One piece of international work. • One major partnership project. • Twelve jazz performances • Thirty Folk gigs • Forty Rock / Indie / Pop gigs • Forty Comedy Shows • Twenty shows specifically for children. • Five Film screenings • Ten Experimental Music Performances 	
<p>Wonderful Wednesdays – New, challenging, experimental, innovative performance work, made accessible for a regular Colchester audience with a radical pay what you can afford admission structure that makes this work, often regarded as the preserve of the arts elite, truly open to anyone. Personally curated by the Director.</p>	

Colchester City Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2023/24

<p>Target: 20 performances in the funding period.</p>	
<p>A dedicated programme of Childrens' Shows and Workshops –All show tickets kept at a low, accessible, affordable price where possible, and a discount for family groups.</p> <p>Target: 20 Shows and 5 workshops, including a run of special Christmas shows at an accessibly low admission price.</p>	

9.4 Community and Audience Development

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Community Events – we commit to program a number of events focusing on the talents of the local community including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Colchester Schools Rock prom • Sixth Form College Battle of the Bands • Colchester Institute bands night • Variety Night in aid of Mayor's Charities • A Colchester Games Fair <p>Showcase events from Colchester based dance and music schools</p>	
<p>Increase known audience attendance figure</p>	
<p>Online audience figures This to include the Colchester Arts Centre website and our social media platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase website Unique Browsers to 250,000 • Increase number of website visits to 400,000 • Increase Facebook follows to 14,500 <p>Increase Twitter followers to 14000</p>	

9.5. Governance and Management

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Target	Outputs/Report
Assigning of Trustees to small cluster groups to monitor specific areas for action / improvement	
Arts Centre Board: Hold an annual Board retreat	
Senior Management Team The creation of this grouping to work closely with the Director on all aspects, particularly Business Plan creation and setting of targets. 1 meeting per month.	

9.6. Diversity and Access

Target	Outputs/Report
Include a person with lived experience of exclusion on our senior management team.	
Develop two partnerships with local community leaders / ambassadors to deliver arts and social engagement portals.	
Create bespoke projects offsite that work with / empower / facilitate communities with lived experience of exclusion.	

9.7 Job Creation, sector skills development and contribution to the local economy

Target	Outputs/Report
Technical team to work with local colleges offering starts to young people / college leavers looking to commence their career in the entertainments industry.	
Volunteers – Volunteering, whilst hugely aiding the operation of the arts centre, also provides a valuable opportunity for work experience and skills development. Target: Increase volunteer numbers by 5% for future-proofing	
Work Experience – we will provide work experience to secondary school aged students and those seeking internships to cement their skills and experience.	

9.8 Children and Young People

Target	Outputs/Report
Production Manager to hold workshop / mentoring sessions for women looking to work in the tech sector.	
Youth Curation – we will look into the establishment of a Youth Council which can curate a number of events per year, aided and guided by the programming team.	
Extend the number of showcase events specifically for emerging young bands.	

9.9 Action on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Target	Outputs/Report
Julie’s Bicycle – we will continue our work with this organisation to establish measurement data for use in setting green targets.	
Environmental responsibilities Sub Committee – meeting monthly to improve green credentials across the organisation. Research into wider aspects of Climate Change. Empirical analysis of data to identify areas in which we can make the biggest impact.	
Waste and Energy Management – regular review of best practice: we commit to constant monitoring of cost effectiveness and green credentials.	
Review of venue heating system.	
Mapping the ecology of our neighbouring graveyard and planning associated public events.	

9.10 Health and Wellbeing of Colchester’s communities and residents

Target	Outputs/Report
Volunteer Walks – held by our volunteers, for sociability , mobility and getting out in the open in relaxed company.	
Champing Nights – camping in the church! A new tool for relaxation – like a mini retreat, honouring aspects of the	

building's history.	
Use of space for “reflection time” – a chance to be in the space alone.	

9.11 How the organisation is applying the Social Value Model:

9.10 How the organisation will promote the support that the Council provides during the period of the agreement:

We acknowledge CBC funding support in all our print, including our quarterly Events Guide, distributed across the Borough and direct mailed to approximately 20,000 mailing list subscribers.

Funding acknowledgement on website and through social media via re-tweets, facebook re-posts etc.

9.12 How the organisation will contribute to achieving actions within the Colchester Cultural Strategy, and wider objectives within the Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan and other relevant local, regional or national strategies:

Cultural Strategy
 We can contribute in these specific areas specified in the Colchester Cultural Strategy Action Plan:

Build on existing sectoral and cross sector partnership working and collaboration

Contribute to Creative Colchester and the LCEP (Local Cultural Education Partnership)
 Continue the Co-production of events with other town NPOs, and continue / expand established relationships with others (Roman River, Amphora etc)

Collaborate on a shared diversity and inclusion training programme across cultural organisations
 Continued sharing of any relevant training sessions with other NPOs and organisations.

Make the most of the public realm and create opportunity for art and heritage outside of cultural venues and museum
 We will make use of nearby public space with our Graveyard Ecology project and

events. We will also seek to bring art to less engaged local communities with our Art Bus (a converted London Routemaster Bus). Further Outreach work planned in the Tendring area as part of the Game Changer project.

Seek to improve the availability and accessibility of ancillary music industry infrastructure (e.g., record and equipment stores), studios (rehearsal, recording) and venues

We already make the space available to up and coming bands for use in video recordings, sound recording and rehearsal. This is available to them at a reduced cost rate. We will increase the number of “grass roots” events for local bands. We continue to champion the inclusion of local bands as support acts for the established touring acts and make it a condition of booking where possible.

Colchester’s Strategic Plan

Colchester Arts Centre contributes to the following items in the Colchester Council Strategic Plan:

Respond to the Climate Emergency

Discussing wider Green issues at our regular Environmental Responsibility Sub Committee meetings. The venue has decided to go paperless (no paper invoicing, minutes or any other documents that can be otherwise digitally stored), Plastic Free (all disposable plastic removed from venue – reusable plastic cups used on bars that have a printed QR code which links to our Green Policy page on our website), involvement in initiatives such as Colchester Travel Plan Club, Cable Guys (cable recycling), and more. Recent venue refurbishments have introduced toilets that recycle waste water from hand basins, LED lighting throughout providing huge energy savings and solar panels are currently under consideration, along with a new heating system.

Conserve and enhance biodiversity

2023/24 will see the introduction of themed walk / tours of our neighbouring graveyard space.

Tackle the causes of inequality and support our most vulnerable people

Reduced concessions ticket prices are available on most events. A “no one turned away for lack of funds” on some events where free entry can be obtained for those experiencing hardship. Wonderful Wednesdays performance season continues to have a pay what you can admission structure which can be anything from £15 to £0 – guilt free. Christmas family panto with low pricing so the whole family can enjoy a Christmas treat at an affordable price. Providing entertainment for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties with the engagement of trailblazing theatre group Frozen Light and others, who make astonishing work exclusively for this demographic. Our refurbished London Routemaster Bus will take work on the road and deliver it into the heart of areas of low arts engagement to reach those most in need.

Provide opportunities for young people

We provide Work Experience placements for secondary school age students, and participate in apprenticeship schemes. Many young bands have performed at the Schools Rock Prom and Sixth Form Battle of the Bands events, some of them going on to be support band to headliners in the regular programme.

Protect, enhance and celebrate Colchester's unique heritage

We are enthusiastic participants in Heritage Open Day, with guided tours by our Director and the entire building opened up to the public. The recent venue refurbishment has retained and sought to compliment the original architectural features, and preserve the story of the building in readiness for its next chapter.

Funding Agreement between Colchester Borough Council and Firstsite

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Colchester's vibrant cultural sector is one of the Borough's unique selling points and something that Colchester Borough Council (CBC) aims to support and sustain, working with partners to align policy and funding to help deliver key social and economic outcomes through investment in the arts.
- 1.2 As Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) Colchester Arts Centre (CAC), The Mercury Theatre and Firstsite are key partners, together providing leadership, capacity, and innovative programmes of delivery that contribute to making Colchester a great place to live, learn, work and visit.
- 1.3 CBC provides core revenue grants to these organisations under the Strategic Arts Partner programme; to enable them to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan and specifically the actions within the new [Cultural Strategy for Colchester](#); support Creative Colchester, a framework for enhancing the impact of the arts and creative industries on the local economy; and contribute to initiatives which help reduce inequalities and which support health, wellbeing and community cohesion across the Borough.
- 1.4 As part of the Council's commitment to transparency, quality and performance management systems, the organisations that receive CBC funding must set out clear objectives and provide performance and sector data so that the service provided through partnership working can be measured, evaluated and improved. This document defines the performance targets and monitoring process and confirms the funding amounts currently agreed.

2.0 Scope and Financial Arrangements

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, the Council will fund Firstsite to the amount of £97K. This is a funding settlement agreed by Cabinet in line with budget strategy to support the core operations of the organisation, as set out in the business and operations plan and to meet the targets for performance set out in section 9 of this Agreement.
- 2.2 Upon signature of this Agreement, the Council will release the funding in quarterly instalments.
- 2.3 Any financial investment that the Council needs to make under its obligations as the owner of the building is deemed to be outside of this agreement. However, any tenant responsibilities that Firstsite holds are considered to be within this agreement.

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

- 2.4 On signing this Agreement, Firstsite recognises that it is in receipt of public funding and accepts responsibility for showing proof of eligibility, meeting the targets for performance, and collecting qualitative and quantitative performance data to provide evidence of the service standards. Firstsite also agrees to provide available sector data to assist with monitoring and performance assessment.
- 2.5 Where appropriate and possible within current resources, Colchester Borough Council will provide non-financial support to Firstsite where it seeks to develop additional services that contribute towards meeting the Council's strategic priorities. If these additional services are developed to a point that requires additional funding, the organisation may request such funding formally, and the Council may issue a separate funding agreement if applicable. If this circumstance arises, the services will be deemed to fall outside of this agreement.

3.0 Eligibility and Criteria for Acceptance

- 3.1 In order to be eligible for funding Firstsite must supply evidence to demonstrate that it is:
 - a. Properly constituted
 - b. Financially viable
 - c. Able to manage its work effectively, monitor and manage risk, and seek necessary professional financial, legal and insurance advice
 - d. Operating with effective policies and procedures in equal opportunities, health and safety, equality and diversity, access, and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - e. Delivering on the current strategic priorities of the Council.

4.0 Performance monitoring framework

- 4.1 Firstsite must submit an up to date Business Plan and operations information to CBC, including a budget to cover the same period as the funding agreement and a copy of the audited accounts from 2021-22 when available.
- 4.2 As a minimum throughout the term of the agreement, the organisation must submit quarterly budget reports if required and invite a Council representative to observe Board meetings if appropriate. The organisation will also participate in an annual review meeting, as outlined below.
- 4.3 At the end of the agreement period, the organisation must provide audited accounts and submit performance data to evidence the organisation's turnover, audience and participation levels as well as contribution to the Council's strategic priorities.

5.0 Annual review process

- 5.1 A review meeting will take place between Colchester Borough Council and Firstsite at least once during the period of the agreement. The meetings shall

Colchester Borough Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2022/23

be attended by the Portfolio Holder (PFH), relevant officer(s) of the Council and executive staff of Firstsite.

- 5.2 The Portfolio Holder and Firstsite Director may be asked to sit before a Scrutiny Panel to monitor performance and achievements. As such, the annual review process should be seen as an opportunity to ensure that the Portfolio Holder can evidence performance within their area of responsibility.

6.0 Acknowledgement of funding

- 6.1 Firstsite will acknowledge its financial assistance from CBC in all marketing and communication materials in print, electronic, broadcast and other formats.
- 6.2 The organisation is asked to specify particular steps that it will take within the period of this Agreement to promote the support that it receives from the Council in Section 9.

7.0 General conditions

- 7.1 The funding provided under this agreement may not be assigned to any other person, association or company other than in the course of delivering the Business Plan and agreed performance targets.
- 7.2 This agreement does not constitute the Firstsite as an agent of the Council or otherwise make the Council liable to any person who may take proceedings against the organisation.
- 7.3 The Council reserves the right to nominate annually a councillor to the Firstsite Board.
- 7.4 Funds will be repayable in full to the Council in the event of any of the following:
- i. Misuse of payment received from the Council by Firstsite
 - ii. A breach of the law by the organisation
 - iii. Petitioning the court for the appointment of an administrator
 - iv. Having a receiver appointed over all or any part of the organisation's assets
 - v. Being the subject of a petition or resolution for the organisation's 'winding up'
- 7.5 The Council should be consulted where any change or development in the direction of the organisation's affairs might affect this Agreement.

8.0 Breach in agreement

- 8.1 In the event of either the Council or Firstsite notifying the other in writing of a breach in this agreement, the parties shall meet to discuss the alleged breach within 21 days.
- 8.2 Both the Council and Firstsite agree that they have an equal responsibility to reach a practical and reasonable solution to the breach, but if after 12 weeks a solution has not been agreed then the parties mutually agree to arbitration.

9.0 Specification of performance targets

- 9.1 The specification of performance targets is developed collaboratively between the Council and Firstsite. The information provided here substantiates the Council's decision to invest public funds and helps to strengthen the partnership delivery model.
- 9.2 The information is set out in line with the Strategic Plan to help to convey to Members, officers and partners how the Council's financial support is an effective and efficient way to deliver services to meet local identified needs.

9.3 Programme and Performance

Target	Outputs/Report
Deliver four seasons of exhibitions	Complete.
Deliver between 100,000 – 120,000 visitors	Complete. Annual footfall up 37% to 112,654
Deliver a film programme with attendance returned to pre-covid levels of tickets sales	Complete. Cinema is back to 91% of pre-covid attendance. We achieved 9% capacity which is an improvement on the previous year's performance even though the percentage is lower. This is because the number of screenings increased as well as the capacity of each screening as we lifted covid restrictions on seat availability.

9.4 Community and Audience Development

Target	Outputs/Report
Produce an audience development pl with a view to engaging x3 new audiences in Firstsite activities across the year	Being updated for new financial year and new opening hours
Deliver x1 major community event per quarter	Complete.
Establish a formal partnership agreement between Firstsite, Bangladeshi womens group and African Families in the UK to secure a long term future of impactful working	Moved to new financial year
Continue to grow the volunteer pool from current levels by year end – with a specific focus on people who identify as D/deaf or disabled	Complete. Current volunteer pool is at 51. 31 new volunteers have been recruited within this period. A small number have also moved on.

9.5. Governance and Management

Target	Outputs/Report
Draft and submit a new 5 year Business plan to underpin our Application to ACE for NPO funding	Complete.
Land our NPO application and uplift request to increase capacity around specific community themes	Standstill funding achieved. Uplift not achieved.
Complete at least x4 Board meetings aligned to key delivery projects	Complete. In addition quarterly catch up meetings between Firstsite and executive and ECC officers have been reinstated.

9.6. Diversity and Access

Target	Outputs/Report
Maintain current high levels of ethnic diversity of audiences	Not achieved – this has dropped to 10%
Ensure D/deaf and disabled audience levels return to pre-covid levels	Not complete – D/deaf and disabled audiences dropped to 7.6%. Increasing them back to pre-covid levels remains a target in the new financial year.
Appoint x2 new team members from diverse backgrounds – focussing on ethnicity, low-socioeconomic and D/deaf disabled.	Complete. We do not reveal individuals data. This target has been met.

9.7 Job Creation, sector skills development and contribution to the local economy

Target	Outputs/Report
Deliver x2 Internships / Apprenticeships	Complete.
Create and fill at least x2 new permanent contracted roles	6 new jobs were created and filled – this includes a new finance role, x4 new champions for Holiday Fun and Catering Services Manager
Ensure café is sustainable and employs local people, and connects with local suppliers and services	Complete. On track to make profit in new financial year.
Research potential for revised opening hours to increase our evening and weekend offer to connect with Leisure Recovery plans	Complete. New opening hours to be instated in June 2023

9.8 Children and Young People

Target	Outputs/Report
Review schools visits post-covid and develop a new plan. Ensure visits are proactively developed and are likely to return to pre-covid levels	In-process.

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Engage young people directly in the design and delivery of our potential new evening offer	In-process YAK will be curating new content in the new financial year
Continue to deliver Holiday Fun every school holiday and research potential and funding for expansion to every weekend year-round	Complete. Weekend trial delivered – funded by The Art Fund

9.9 Action on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Target	Outputs/Report
Confirm funding for major capital programme to reduce carbon footprint	Not complete. Review of building still outstanding
Implement stage 1 of lighting programme	In-process. Majority of works shifted to new financial year
Commission and publish a 'green review' to establish short, medium and long-term priorities	In-process. Complete in Q2 of new financial year

9.10 Health and Wellbeing of Colchester's communities and residents

Target	Outputs/Report
Understand how Holiday Fun can be rolled out for other communities in need	Not complete. We have focussed on weekend trial. This will be researched in new financial year.
Develop and implement a creative programme that addresses the needs of people who are most vulnerable in our society – in particular refugees and asylum seekers	In-process. Research is being undertaken into the continuation of our Museum of The Year programme
Develop plans around the cinema to offer free screenings especially for vulnerable and isolated communities post-covid as a means of understanding longer-term needs.	This is being deferred to the new financial year as part of the development of our broader membership scheme

9.11 How the organisation will promote the support that the Council provides during the period of the agreement

<p>9.11.1 CBC Logo and acknowledgement of support will appear on all promotional material including x15,000 exhibition guides, new website, fortnightly e-bulletins and social media posts.</p> <p>9.11.2 Firstsite will continue to deliver a Community events programme which proactively seeks to offer its facilities to specific communities who will benefit from our support such as Colchester Refugee Action, Civic Alliance, Big Sunday etc</p> <p>9.11.3 Firstsite will regularly present at conferences and events locally and nationally to raise the profile of CBC's investment in culture.</p> <p>9.11.4 Firstsite will attend Independent Advisory Group meetings, Creative</p>
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Colchester meetings, Leisure Recovery Board meetings

9.12 How the organisation will contribute specifically to achieving the actions within the Colchester Cultural Strategy, and wider objectives within the Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan and other relevant local, regional or national strategies

Local

9.12.1 Firstsite will take a proactive leading role in the delivery of project outcomes for the Creative Colchester Strategy and Board.

9.12.2 Firstsite is now a member of the Visit Essex Consortium, the One Colchester Volunteer strategy group and University of Essex LGBT Action Group

Regional

9.12.3 Firstsite is collaborating with ECC on long-term sustainability development for Culture across the region

National

9.12.4 Firstsite is a member of the +Tate network of galleries that regularly meet to share best practice and collaborative opportunities as well as visiting other organisations to see first hand activity in other regions of the UK.

9.12.5 Firstsite is proactively drawing high profile exhibitions and projects such as the forthcoming Singh Twins and Sarah Lucas

9.12.6 Firstsite will continue to build on it's Art Fund Museum of the Year status in collaboration with Art Fund and other cultural partners nationally.

Funding Agreement between Colchester City Council and Firstsite

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Colchester's vibrant cultural sector is one of the city's key strengths and something that Colchester City Council (CCC) aims to support and sustain, working with partners to align policy and funding to help deliver key social and economic outcomes through investment in the arts.
- 1.2 As established Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) Colchester Arts Centre (CAC), The Mercury Theatre and Firstsite are key partners, together providing leadership, capacity, and innovative programmes of delivery that contribute to making Colchester a great place to live, learn, work and visit.
- 1.3 CCC provides core revenue grants to these organisations under the Strategic Arts Partner programme: to enable them to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan and actions within the [Cultural Strategy for Colchester](#); support Creative Colchester, a partnership for furthering and enhancing the impact of the arts and creative industries on the local economy; and to contribute to initiatives which help reduce inequalities and support health, wellbeing and community cohesion across the City area.
- 1.4 As part of the Council's commitment to transparency, quality and performance management systems, the organisations that receive CCC funding must set out clear objectives and provide performance and sector data so that the service provided through partnership working can be measured, evaluated and improved. This document defines the annual performance objectives and monitoring process, and confirms the funding amounts currently agreed.

2.0 Scope and Financial Arrangements

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, the Council will fund Firstsite to the amount of £97K. This is a funding settlement agreed by Cabinet in line with budget strategy to support the core operations of the organisation, as set out in the business and operations plan and to meet the targets for performance set out in section 9 of this Agreement.
- 2.2 Upon signature of this Agreement, the Council will release the funding in quarterly instalments.
- 2.3 Any financial investment that the Council needs to make under its obligations as the owner of the building is deemed to be outside of this agreement. However, any tenant responsibilities that Firstsite holds are considered to be within this agreement.

Colchester City Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2023/24

- 2.4 On signing this Agreement, Firstsite recognises that it is in receipt of public funding and accepts responsibility for showing proof of eligibility, meeting the targets for performance, and collecting qualitative and quantitative performance data to provide evidence of the service standards. Firstsite also agrees to provide available sector data to assist with monitoring and performance assessment.
- 2.5 Where appropriate and possible within current resources, Colchester City Council will provide non-financial support to Firstsite where it seeks to develop additional services that contribute towards meeting the Council's strategic priorities. If these additional services are developed to a point that requires additional funding, the organisation may request such funding formally, and the Council may issue a separate funding agreement if applicable. If this circumstance arises, the services will be deemed to fall outside of this agreement.

3.0 Eligibility and Criteria for Acceptance

- 3.1 In order to be eligible for funding Firstsite must supply evidence to demonstrate that it is:
- a. Properly constituted
 - b. Financially viable
 - c. Able to manage its work effectively, monitor and manage risk, and seek necessary professional financial, legal and insurance advice
 - d. Operating with effective policies and procedures in equal opportunities, health and safety, equality and diversity, access, and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - e. Delivering on the current strategic priorities of the Council.

4.0 Performance monitoring framework

- 4.1 Firstsite must submit an up to date Business Plan and operations information to CCC, including a budget to cover the same period as the funding agreement and a copy of the audited accounts from 2022-23 when available.
- 4.2 As a minimum throughout the term of the agreement, the organisation must submit quarterly budget reports if required and invite a Council representative to observe Board meetings if appropriate. The organisation will also participate in an annual review meeting, as outlined below.
- 4.3 At the end of the agreement period, the organisation must provide audited accounts and submit performance data to evidence the organisation's turnover, audience and participation levels as well as contribution to the Council's strategic priorities.

5.0 Annual review process

- 5.1 A review meeting will take place between Colchester City Council and Firstsite at least once during the period of the agreement. The meetings shall be

Colchester City Council strategic funding for arts organisations 2023/24

attended by the Portfolio Holder (PFH), relevant officer(s) of the Council and executive staff of Firstsite.

- 5.2 The Portfolio Holder and Firstsite Director may be asked to sit before the CCC Scrutiny Panel to monitor performance and achievements. As such, the annual review process should be seen as an opportunity to ensure that the Portfolio Holder can evidence performance within their area of responsibility.

6.0 Acknowledgement of funding

- 6.1 Firstsite will acknowledge its financial assistance from CCC in all marketing and communication materials in print, electronic, broadcast and other formats.
- 6.2 The organisation is asked to specify particular steps that it will take within the period of this Agreement to promote the support that it receives from the Council in Section 9.

7.0 General conditions

- 7.1 The funding provided under this agreement may not be assigned to any other person, association or company other than in the course of delivering the Business Plan and agreed performance targets.
- 7.2 This agreement does not constitute the Firstsite as an agent of the Council or otherwise make the Council liable to any person who may take proceedings against the organisation.
- 7.3 The Council reserves the right to nominate annually a councillor to the Firstsite Board.
- 7.4 Funds will be repayable in full to the Council in the event of any of the following:
- i. Misuse of payment received from the Council by Firstsite
 - ii. A breach of the law by the organisation
 - iii. Petitioning the court for the appointment of an administrator
 - iv. Having a receiver appointed over all or any part of the organisation's assets
 - v. Being the subject of a petition or resolution for the organisation's 'winding up'
- 7.5 The Council should be consulted where any change or development in the direction of the organisation's affairs might affect this Agreement.

8.0 Breach in agreement

- 8.1 In the event of either the Council or Firstsite notifying the other in writing of a breach in this agreement, the parties shall meet to discuss the alleged breach within 21 days.
- 8.2 Both the Council and Firstsite agree that they have an equal responsibility to reach a practical and reasonable solution to the breach, but if after 12 weeks a solution has not been agreed then the parties mutually agree to arbitration.

9.0 Specification of performance targets

- 9.1 The specification of performance targets is developed collaboratively between the Council and Firstsite. The information provided here substantiates the Council's decision to invest public funds and helps to strengthen the partnership delivery model.
- 9.2 The information is set out to help to convey to Members, officers and partners how the Council's annual grant supports the Strategic Arts Partner organisation to operate effectively, deliver to residents and to contribute to wider strategic aims.

9.3 Programme and Performance

Target	Outputs/Report
Firstsite will deliver a programme of x5 major exhibitons and ancillary shows over the course of the financial year. At least one of these shows will be work by an artist living locally or from the region. At least one of these exhibitions will be work made by or with children and young people from the YAK programme	
Firstsite will finalise it's plans for the long term support of Mehdi Jalalghdamian and the continuation of the Museum of the Year Programme	
Firstsite will implement a series of public engagement events including talks, classes, workshops and tours increasing from x5 per week in Q1 to x25 per week in Q4	

9.4 Community and Audience Development

Target	Outputs/Report
Maintain footfall levels from 2022/23 and aim to exceed by 10% to 124,000	
Introduce new opening hours and increase visitor offer to galleries by 30%	
Introduce new enhanced engagement activities year-round building from x5 activities per week in Q1 to x25 activities per week in Q4	

9.5. Governance and Management

Target	Outputs/Report
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Hold a minimum of x4 Board meetings with CCC nominated present and observers present where possible.	
Draft the next chapter of the Firstsite long-term plan connecting from 2025/26 to 2029/30	
Deliver x3 new major multi-year funding partnerships in relation to creative team and participatory practice, the Children, Young People and Families team.	

9.6. Diversity and Access

Target	Outputs/Report
Appoint new SMT role from Protected characteristic group with special focus on BAME, disabled and LGBTQI+ communities	
Return audience diversity levels to pre-covid performance of 14% non white audiences	

9.7 Job Creation, sector skills development and contribution to the local economy

Target	Outputs/Report
Create x5 Creative Associate roles for people who identify as having protected characteristics with special focus on ethnicity and d/Deaf disabled people	
Deliver Creative Team restructure to overhaul diversity and equity within key area of team to create x15 new freelance opportunities in the team. (funding dependent)	

9.8 Children and Young People

Target	Outputs/Report
Deliver Holiday Fun every School Holiday and seek funds deliver year-	

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round activity for three years	
Restructure Learning & Education team to Children, Young People and Families team with redefined role for YAK (target partially carried over from last year)	

9.9 Action on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Target	Outputs/Report
Complete the lighting replacement programme	
Complete a building wide review to identify next priorities	

9.10 Health and Wellbeing of Colchester's communities and residents

Target	Outputs/Report
Commission evaluation of the impact of Holiday Fun on the health and wellbeing of children and families living locally	
Colaborate with the other NPOs on a joint economic and social impact report for the sector	

9.11 How the organisation is applying the Social Value Model:

Firstsite's business plan is conceived around the five values it creates as an organisation:

Creative – our artistic output is experimental and groundbreaking in terms of what we show and how we go about authoring our programme. The majority of our programme is made with or by people from protected characteristic groups. We tackle the most important and relevant issues that society is facing today and we invite a spectrum of voices to share their ideas about our common future.

Social – All of our activities are geared towards having a positive social impact for people living and working in Colchester. Many of our programme start with an analysis of needs and grow from there to help people grow and flourish as creative citizens.

Economic – Firstsite generates a wealth of economic resources that are drawn to and in the majority spent in Colchester and surrounding region. Every pound of profit we create is reinvested back into people and programmes in the area

Environmental – Firstsite is developing a new sustainability strategy. Starting with our capital investment in our lights throughout the building and growing to include other impactful priorities. We aim to get to a position where we are generating more energy than we need and can share this back with the community.

Sector Research & Development – Firstsite is a sector leader in terms of taking managed risks with regards how we innovate and develop in an agile and creative way. This is with regards our approach to all key areas of operation – artistic programme, team development, sustainability, governance and management.

9.10 How the organisation will promote the support that the Council provides during the period of the agreement:

Firstsite will:

Include Colchester City Council logo and wording where space permits to outline support for our activities on all promotional materials both in print and online.

Feature CCC prominently in the building to acknowledge support alongside other major stakeholders

Include Colchester City Council in our standard 'boiler plate' on all press releases throughout the year, especially those relating to the 10th anniversary celebrations.

Invite senior Councillors to speak at the launch of major exhibitions and events

Pro-actively articulate the support of CCC in any major publication or report produced and circulated relating to Firstsite activities.

Promote Colchester City Council's support at all public engagements where the Director is speaking on the behalf of the organisation

9.12 How the organisation will contribute to achieving actions within the Colchester Cultural Strategy, and wider objectives within the Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan and other relevant local, regional or national strategies:

Creating Safe, Healthy and Happy Communities

Firstsite contributes by designing and delivering cultural programmes that proactively reach out to various sectors of our community who are under-served or overlooked.

We engage people directly in our programmes and offer alternative care options, which engage people in new and informal ways. Our iconic building is at the heart of the town centre and we welcome thousands of people to create a community hub.

Our diverse audiences overlap and a by-product of our audience engagement strategies is a significant increase in social co-hesion and wellbeing.

Our activities during the COVID-19 pandemic have been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours and also have enable Firstsite to be shortlisted for the Art Fund Museum of the year.

Growing a fair economy so everyone benefits

Firstsite generates many employment opportunities from casual to permanent roles and including apprenticeships. Openings are directed towards as diverse a pool of applicants as possible.

The majority of our artistic and cultural offer is for free enabling many families to enjoy a whole day out at the centre of town. We also offer free activities throughout school holiday periods. These are directed towards families from low socio economic backgrounds in particular.

Firstsite generates millions of pounds of investment into Colchester. In 2020 alone it achieved income of £1m to enable the recovery from the pandemic.

Celebrating our Heritage and Culture

Firstsite is one of the four large scale National Portfolio Organisations in Colchester enjoying high-level support from Arts Council England. This status is maximised fully to ensure Colchester and the East Anglian region can access the worlds best visual art and culture all day every day and for free.

Our artistic programme celebrates both our ancient cultural past symbolised by our original roman mosaic, alongside, the very best in art and culture from present day Colchester, East Anglia and internationally.

We partner on significant external projects such as co-commissioning the statue of Millicent Fawcett for Parliament Square with the Mayor of London. Equally our world class digital projects connect with families and artists around the globe including our award winning 'Art is Where the Home Is' Activity packs which have connected with over 500,000 children and families around the world.

Firstsite is one of three Arts Council Collection National Partners, meaning the residents of Colchester and Essex have direct access to the Arts Council's prestigious collections through our co-curation programme.

Cultural Strategy

Firstsite will support the delivery of the Cultural Strategy through membership of Creative Colchester and support for projects delivered by the latter, and through support for Colchester Creative Pathways (the Local Cultural Education Partnership) as well as maintaining its support and contribution to city wide events in the public realm.

The background is a dark blue field decorated with several large, colorful triangles in shades of yellow, red, blue, green, and pink, scattered around the edges.

MERCURY

Presentation

Colchester City Council Scrutiny Committee



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



SOUTH EAST
LOCAL ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP



Essex County Council



Colchester



ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND
LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Arts, Culture and The Creative Industries

The UK has a long-standing legacy and reputation as a cultural powerhouse.

The Creative Industries have been identified as one of the UK's key growth sectors by the Chancellor, and together with culture they make a significant contribution to the UK national and local economy.

Culture and creative industries are worth approximately **7%** of the UK's GVA, at around **£160bn**.

There are **3.2 million** jobs in the sector with growth of **13.5%** since 2019, compared with **0.9%** growth across the whole UK economy.

Between 2019 and 2022, the GVA contribution of the creative industries alone grew by **12%** relative to **2%** across the UK economy as a whole.

The cultural sector grew at **5%** over the same period.

Given that the sector was significantly impacted by COVID this builds a picture of a highly resilient sector, with potential to grow further.

Inclusive Growth Network/Local Government Association Jan 2024

Impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis

- The Mercury faces the same financial pressures as the Council -
 - Increases in staffing costs - minimum wage, inflation
 - Cost of raw materials and stock
 - Utility costs (increased last year by **£80,000** alone)
- There are a finite number of seats and available days/shows - increasing ticket prices would exclude audiences – tickets still available from £10
- Our contingency for 2022/23 on a turnover of **£5.4 million** was just **£15,000!**
- We spent reserves in 2022/23 to balance the budget (and continue this year)
- We issued a financial statement warning of the challenges in April 2022
- All public sector grants remain at standstill (real term reduction of **7.8%**) – approx. in year loss in real terms of **(£82,000)**

Together we face the most severe challenges in our history!

2022/23 Context

2022/23 was the first full year of being in our new building.

However, audiences were slow to return post pandemic in common with the wider leisure, culture and heritage sectors.

- **497** performances achieved (target of **400**).
- **60%** capacity - national average of **48%**.
- **105,580** attendees (target **100,000**).
- **5** national tours visiting Derby, London, Salisbury, York and Coventry.

Total performances -**141 (12,316)**

- Free Un-ticketed Events – **368**
- **38,186** attendees (target **20,000**)



Audiences and Users

Audience Feedback – rated the Mercury as **4.3*** out of **5***

Google Reviews - **4.7*** out of **5***

63% of audiences were local (CO postcode) – **37%** beyond

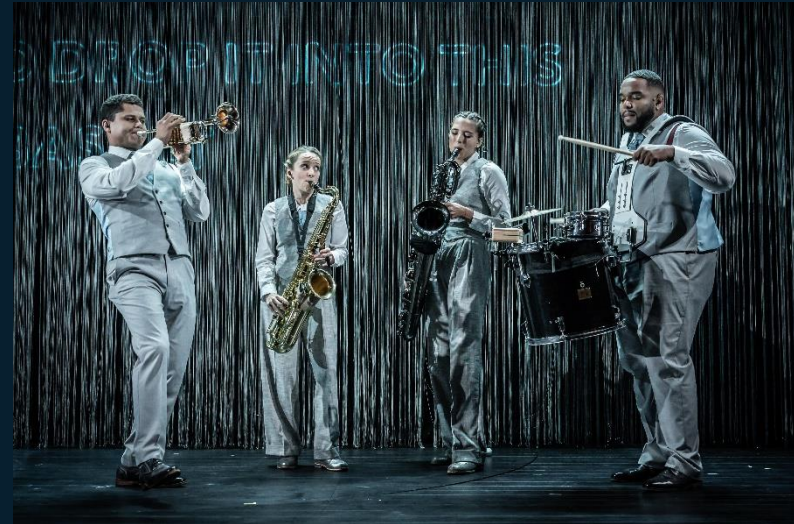
8% of tickets sold to disabled people (target **7%**)

27 Access Performances - sign language interpreted, audio description, relaxed (target **16**)

Audience Diversity – **12%** global majority, **8%** disabled, **77%** women

6% lower socio-economic areas of Colchester (**10%** target)

16% tickets sold as concessions (target **10%**)



Creative Engagement

36,027 children, young people and adults took part (target **30,000**)

3,467 sessions (target **800**)

Teachers Forum – **42** local schools engaged

Mercury Young Company – **487** children and young people (target **150**)

Senior Social Club – **83** sessions engaging **1,079** older residents

Talent and Professional Development

2,788 artists engaged in the programme (target **60**)

Mercury Creatives

116 creative businesses supported

124 new jobs created

132 new products

£2.2million of new investment into Colchester and Essex



Mercury Rising



Mercury Rising

New building reopened in June 2021 as one of only **5** new capital projects in the UK.

The challenges of Covid had a significant impact on the project resulting in the project being 10 months late.

Project costs increased due to Covid to **£11.9 million (£14.2m gross)** but *all* funds and increased costs were secured.

The building has a **VERY GOOD BREEAM** rating it in the top **25%** of sustainable public buildings in the UK.

For the first time in our history, we are now fully accessible both front of house and backstage.

Additional Activities

The Mercury continues to be active in the civic life and well-being of the City through forums and events such as:

- Covid Memorial Event
- Queen's Jubilee Celebrations
- Death of the Queen
- Kings Coronation
- Creative Colchester
- Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP)
- Development of the new Cultural Strategy
- Colchester Business Improvement District (BID)
- Visit Essex
- Colchester Ambassadors



Recent Highlights

Unbelievable – first West End transfer last summer

Mercury Creatives – additional **£440k** funding approved for the next 3 years along with new investment from ECC, Tendring and Harlow

SELEP - **£500k** recently approved for capital works - **£400k** to be spent locally

Awards - Shortlisted for The Stage Newspaper National Innovation Award

Associate National Companies – English Touring Theatre, Paines Plough, Graeae Theatre Company and Frantic Assembly

Stage Text – ACE NPO - charity for D/deaf and hard of hearing people to access arts and culture – the Mercury is now their national headquarters

Graeae Associate Artist – first disabled artist for the Eastern Region

Theatre of Sanctuary – one of only 16 theatres in the UK to be given this status

Coming Up in 2024/5.....

Importance of being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

MidSummer by David Greig – new musical this Spring

Here On – site specific show with Good Chance and Geko in Harwich next summer celebrating the 85th anniversary of Kinder Transport. Engaging a local community cast with partners in London, Berlin and Holland.

Manningtree Witches - new world premiere of AK Blakemore's award-winning debut novel

The Green Mile by Stephen King – worldwide rights – premiere in Colchester

Radio Caroline – new stage musical celebrating the 60's and 70's musical sensation

Peter Pan – Panto Christmas 2024

Economic Impact

It costs approx. **£5.4 million** per year to run the Mercury (turnover has more than doubled in 10 years)

The Mercury remains as the largest and only full time producing theatre in Essex serving 1.8m people.

We employ **143** staff (across full time, part time and casual) the majority of whom are Colchester residents.

Just **20%** of our annual turn-over is from public sector grants (Colchester City Council, Arts Council England and Essex County Council).

We cost each Colchester resident just 87p per year!

Arts Council England is currently a **4 -year** funding agreement and is a *highly* competitive process. They would not invest locally without the support of CCC and ECC.

We generate **80% - £4.4 million** of income through ticket sales, bar, catering and merchandise sale and fundraising).

Economic Impact

For every **£1** invested in grant income we generate a further **£4** in Colchester.

As an organisation we spend at least **£4.7 million** in the local economy each year (including our local purchasing and our annual wage bill).

We prioritise support for local businesses:

- **Food and drink suppliers** (our bar and catering operations source local products as a priority)
- **Printing and design**
- **Wood merchants** for our sets
- **Paint, tools and equipment** for sets and **maintenance, fabric suppliers** for costumes
- **Cleaning supplies and contracts**
- **Ice cream!**
- Annually our audiences and visitors spend **£3.6 million** in the city centre (evidence taken from surveys).

Economic Impact – Mercury Rising

The project has generated:

- **52 jobs** in the last four years (especially through an international pandemic).

Of our **£11.9 million** capital budget we have:

Spent **£10.6 million** in the local economy with companies such as:

- Colchester Borough Homes
- Phelans
- Colchester Construction
- Colchester Electrical Services
- Essex Mechanical Services
- Purcell's Architects

We employed **12** local young unemployed people through the Government's Kickstart Scheme.

3 Apprenticeships currently in partnership with Colchester Institute.

Mercury Rising brought **£9.5 million** of new investment into Colchester that would not have been possible by CCC alone.

Questions and Comments





Scrutiny Panel

Item
12

13 February 2024

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Simon Thorp / Charlotte Holl ☎ 03300 538049 / 506949
Title	Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2024-2025		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The panel is invited to consider the Corporate Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Targets for 2024-2025.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 To scrutinise the Corporate KPI Targets for 2024-2025 as proposed in the report.

3. Reason for Scrutiny

- 3.1 To consider KPI targets for 2024-2025 as a key element of the Council's performance monitoring.

4. Background Information

4.1 It is proposed that the set of KPI measures in the table below be agreed and set for 2024-2025. The KPIs have been chosen to reflect our financial circumstances and the Strategic Plan for 2023-2026. They are grouped in a financial theme and themes that reflect the Strategic Plan and Office for Local Government (OFLOG) performance indicators. A range of other performance measures will in turn be monitored at Budget and Service level (Enjoy Colchester, Transformation, Insight & Business Improvement, Modern City Services, Place & Prosperity, Housing & Well Being).

4.2 The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan can be found at Appendix A.

Financial theme			
KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Council Tax collected	Monthly	97.65%	It is proposed to keep the current target for 2024-2025. Council Tax collection has remained strong during 2023-2024 and is on track to achieve target by Year End.
Business Rates (NNDR) collected	Monthly	98%	It is proposed to keep the current target for 2024-2025. NNDR collection has remained strong during 2023-2024 and is on track to achieve target by Year End.
HRA Rent collected	Monthly	98%	It is proposed to keep the current target for 2024-2025. Current half-year performance is below target at 95.74%. The increase in number of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit is a factor.
Garden Waste subscriptions	Quarterly	7053 (Number of active subscribers)	This indicator measures the number of Garden Waste active subscribers for 2024-2025. The scheme went live in January 2024.

Strategic Plan – Respond to climate emergency theme			
KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Residual household waste per household	Monthly	354 kg	It is proposed to keep the current target for 2024-2025. Performance is ahead of target at the half-year point 2023-2024.
Household waste reused, recycled, and composted	Monthly	53%	It is proposed to keep the current target for 2024-2025.

			Performance is tracking slightly below target at the half-year point 2023-2024.
Fly tipping incidents	Quarterly	2,100	This indicator measures the number of fly tipping incidents reported and cleared. The number of incidents at half-year point for 2023-2024 is 529.

Strategic Plan – Deliver homes for the most in need theme

KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Affordable homes delivered (gross)	Quarterly	380 homes over three years (2023-2026)	It is proposed that the previous target is kept for the 3 year period 2023-2026. The target includes the delivery of all affordable housing including Housing Association s106/non s106, Acquisitions, Council new build and First Homes.
Monitoring the number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households.	Monthly	3.0	It is proposed to keep the current target at 3.0 households per 1,000. Performance at half-year point in 2023-2024 measured at 3.84. This demonstrates the increased number of households living in temporary accommodation.
Average time to re-let council homes	Monthly	28 days	It is proposed that the current target of 28 days is kept for 2024-2025. The figure for December 2023 shows an average of 32.54 days.
Repairs completed within target timescale	Monthly	95%	It is proposed that the current target is kept for 2024-2025. Half-year performance for 2023-2024 is below target at 83.50%. Pressures on in-house and contractor resources remain.
Percentage of homes that do not meet the decent homes standard	Annually	0%	It is proposed that the current target is kept for 2024-2025. This indicator reflects the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Deliver homes for those most in need</i> theme.
Customer satisfaction with latest repair	Monthly	90.5%	It is proposed that the current target is kept for 2024-2025. This indicator reflects the 2023-2026

			Strategic Plan <i>Deliver homes for those most in need</i> theme.
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Strategic Plan – Improve health, well-being, and happiness theme

KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Time to process housing benefit and local council tax support new claims and changes	Monthly	HB – 4 days LCTS – 5 days	It is proposed to keep the current targets for 2024-2025. The team continue to exceed targets at the half-year point for both HB and LCTS in 2023-2024.
Sickness rate in working days	Monthly	Rolling 8 days	It is proposed to keep the current target for 2024-2025. Half-year performance for 2023-2024 measured at 7.93 days.
Number of upheld complaints (per 100,000 population)	Quarterly	Target to be confirmed	It is proposed to introduce this new indicator for 2024-2025 in line with current OFLOG indicators.

Strategic Plan – Grow our economy so everyone benefits theme

KPI Description	Frequency	Target	Supporting narrative
Additional Homes	Quarterly	920 homes	It is proposed that the current target is kept for 2024-2025. This indicator is linked to the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Grow our economy so everyone benefits</i> theme.
Social value in procurement	Twice per year	70% of all (non-framework) contracts over £100k awarded to include social value benefits	It is proposed to keep the current target for 2024-2025. It has been added to reflect the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan <i>Grow our economy so everyone benefits</i> theme.

4.3 **CBH KPI Targets.** The following KPI Targets have been determined and agreed by Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities and detailed in the Colchester Borough Homes new Medium Term Delivery Plan, approved at the Principal Liaison Meeting in February 2023 by the CBH Board and PFH for Housing and Communities.

- HRA Rent Collected.
- Monitoring the number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households.
- Average time to re-let council homes.
- Repairs completed within target timescale.
- Percentage of homes that do not meet the decent homes standard.

- Customer satisfaction with latest repair.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 5.1 Where required, specific Equality Impact Assessments have been conducted for policies and activities rather than for individual performance indicators.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 Having a robust corporate performance monitoring framework with appropriate KPI's will contribute to the effective delivery of the Strategic Plan 2023-2026.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 There are not any direct implications with regard to consultation.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 The performance report contains measures for our key performance. Many of these are used to monitor the performance of our services, and as such these may be of public interest. The performance report and related information is published on the Performance section of the Council's website.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 The annual budget setting report considered separately by Cabinet will ensure there are appropriate resources to deliver the KPI targets for 2024-2025.

10. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 Some of the proposed KPI's will ensure effective performance monitoring of key areas which have a positive impact on Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety.

11. Health and Safety Implications

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

12. Risk Management Implications

- 12.1 There are no specific risk management implications associated with this decision.

13. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 13.1 The KPI targets proposed for recycling and residual waste are examples of indicators of performance at tackling Environment and Sustainability issues. However, as work progresses in responding to the Climate Emergency Declaration, Scrutiny may wish to consider if any additional corporate KPIs in this area are required.

Appendices

Appendix A. [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

Background Papers

Not applicable.

Report of	Chief Operating Officer and Shared Director of Digital and Transformation	Author	Richard Block and Melissa Kemp Salt Richard.block @colchester.gov.uk and melissa.kemp-salt @colchester.gov.uk
Title	Fit for the Future		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides details of proposals to reimagine what we do as a Council and how we deliver services so it we are 'Fit for the Future'. The proposals are in the form of an integrated portfolio of activity covering all services that will transform their delivery, generate additional income and reduce our net operating costs by 25% over the next 3 years.
- 1.2 Details of the overarching portfolio of activity are provided as well as information about each programme. Enabling plans to ensure governance, people and communications implications are managed effectively are also included.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Panel is invited to pre-scrutinise the proposals and make any recommendations they deem necessary to Cabinet for consideration when they meet on 13 March.

3. Reason for Scrutiny

- 3.1 To ensure there is a robust portfolio of activity to future proof the Council and ensure we are adequately prepared to deliver savings required in the medium-term financial forecast.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The scale of the financial challenge we face as a Council is huge. The cost-of-living crisis, alongside the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and rising energy costs have placed significant pressure on our budgets and we simply cannot continue to operate as we are.
- 4.2 Our response to this financial challenge must be radical; to close the budget gap and future proof our organisation, we will need to reduce our net operating costs by 25% over the next 3 years. This will be through a combination of additional income and reduced cost of providing services.
- 4.3 To achieve this, we need a fundamental programme of work that reimagines what we do as a Council and how we deliver it. The 'Fit for the Future' programme of work will make sure that we are exactly that; fit for the future of our city, of our organisation and of our people.
- 4.4 Whilst this programme of work will help to align us with the Medium-Term Financial Forecast and ensure we are closing the budget gap identified, it will also prepare us for the longer-term financial challenge that lies ahead.
- 4.5 This programme of work will involve a significant change in our relationship with our residents, communities and partners. The changes we make will have a very significant and visible impact across the city, and we must work to realign people's expectations of the services we deliver. As our duty, and at the heart of what we do as a local authority, we will continue to do all we can to protect those residents who are the most vulnerable and do what we can to mitigate the impact changes may have on them.
- 4.6 The proposed 'Fit for the Future' portfolio of activity to achieve this is shown at appendix A. This shows each theme with individual programmes, key milestones, forecast savings/ income and implications. Priority has been given to developing detail for elements that deliver savings in 2024/2025 but information is also included for programmes that deliver savings in later years where this is available.
- 4.7 The activity proposed in this paper will also need to remain flexible and adaptable to any future pressures or changes in circumstances. It will be regularly reviewed through the governance outlined.
- 4.8 Effective internal and external communications will be essential to the success of 'Fit for the Future'. A proposed fully integrated internal and external communications plan is attached at appendix B.
- 4.9 Our staff are key to the success of these proposals and the changes to staffing and roles in the Council arising from 'Fit for the Future' are significant. As such, a workforce plan has been developed to ensure staff are supported through the changes ahead. This is attached at appendix C.
- 4.10 Effective governance will be key to ensuring appropriate oversight and decision making from senior officers and councillors. Proposed governance arrangements are attached at appendix D.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 5.1 As changes are made to services and staffing structures equality and diversity implications will be assessed using individual equality impact assessments.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 'Fit for the Future' will directly deliver against the Modern City Services strand of the strategic plan. When making any changes to services a key consideration of the future service provision will be contribution to all objectives of the Strategic Plan.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The detailed communications plan at appendix B demonstrates the commitment to engage and consult with staff informally. Staff and the recognised trade union will also be consulted formally about any changes to staffing structures and roles.
- 7.2 Stakeholders and the public will also be consulted throughout using various mechanisms and existing networks including One Colchester and the Residents Panel.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 The detailed communications plan at appendix B demonstrates how changes arising from 'Fit for the Future' will be managed.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 'Fit for the Future' is essential to deliver budget savings required by the revised Medium Term Financial Forecast. By developing a 3 year planned strategic programme of change, savings can be delivered progressively avoiding the need for the development of new budget savings plans each year.
- 9.2 The forecast budget savings from each element of 'Fit for the Future' are shown in appendix A and show a roadmap to the delivery of a balanced budget over the next 3 years of the medium-term financial forecast. These are a combination of additional income and reduced operating costs.
- 9.3 Investment will also be required to facilitate many aspects of the portfolio and as reported to Cabinet in January 2024, the Council's available reserves allow for this. Investments will be made on a case-by-case basis only once a robust business case is made.

10. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 As changes are made to services and staffing structures the health, wellbeing and community safety implications will be assessed.

Health and Safety Implications

- 10.1 There are no specific implications.

11. Risk Management Implications

11.1 Each programme that makes up 'Fit for the Future' will have its own risk register which in turn will feed into an overall risk register for the portfolio of activity. This will be reviewed and managed through the governance proposed at Appendix D.

12. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

12.1 The implications of each programme will be carefully considered as changes to services are considered.

12.2 Several elements of 'fit for the future' have real potential to support the Council's strategic objectives relating to environmental sustainability such as the review of the waste strategy, review of our assets and the review of the street care and greening service.

Appendices

Appendix A – Details of the 'Fit for the Future' portfolio

Appendix B – Communications plan

Appendix C – Workforce plan

Appendix D – Proposed governance

Background Papers

None

Colchester City Council – Scrutiny

Fit for the Future Transformation Portfolio

13 February 2024

Fit for the Future Portfolio – Key Messages

- The scale of the financial challenge councils face is huge. The cost-of-living crisis, alongside the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and rising energy costs have placed significant pressure on our budgets and we simply cannot continue to operate as we are.
- Our response to this financial challenge must be radical; to close the budget gap and future proof our organisation, we will need to reduce our operating costs by 25% over the next 3 years.
- To achieve this, we need a fundamental portfolio of work to reimagine what we do as a Council and how we deliver it. The 'Fit for the Future' portfolio will make sure that we are exactly that; fit for the future of our city, of our organisation and of our people.
- Whilst this work will help to align us with the Medium-Term Financial Forecast and ensure we are closing the budget gap identified, it will also prepare us for the longer-term financial challenge that lies ahead.

Fit for the Future Portfolio – Purpose

- We are starting a portfolio of work which will span the next three years to respond to challenges we face to:
 - Run council services within budgets
 - Adapt our services to meet the changing needs of our communities
 - Seek opportunities for additional income
 - Invest in technology and the skills of our workforce to enable efficiencies and modernise services.
- The portfolio of work will involve a change in our relationship with our residents, communities and partners. The changes we make will have a visible impact across the city, and we must work to realign people's expectations of the services we deliver.
- We will continue to do all we can to protect those residents who are most vulnerable and do what we can to mitigate the impact changes may have on them.
- We will do all that can to support our people through this change, in line with our values. We will show integrity and kindness, be open and honest, demonstrate commitment to our skills, expertise and creativity, and maintain our pride in public service.

Fit for the Future Portfolio – Terms used

The following terms will be used within the project descriptions:

Several initiatives will include multiple elements from redesigned services and roles that result in a reduced cost of operation. The elements include:

- Investment
 - Commitment of funding needed to achieve benefits for delivering a new service or change to an existing service
- Cuts or reductions
 - Removal of entire services, or significant reduction in the scale of services provided
- Efficiencies
 - Savings
 - Services maintaining but delivered more efficiently/effectively
- Income
 - Additional money generated by a service

Fit for the Future - Portfolio Structure

Our Fit for the Future portfolio will look at the organisation as whole and aligns our programmes of work into 5 streams of governance:

- Environment
- Leisure and Economy
- Housing
- Assets
- Corporate

The projects, programmes and targets within the portfolio will evolve over time.

Fit for the Future

Senior Leadership Board				
Environment	Leisure & Economy	Housing	Assets	Corporate
Waste Services	Culture & Heritage	HRA Review	Asset Management	Shared Services
Rosa Tanfield	Frank Hargrave	Lindsay Barker	Mandy Jones	Richard Block
Greening & Street Care	Active and Wellbeing	Housing Provision		Future Workforce
Rosa Tanfield Mel Rundle	Rory Doyle	Philip Sullivan		Jess Douglas
	Economic Growth			Digital Customer
	Matt Sterling			Mel Kemp-Salt

Fit for the Future Savings & Revenue Financial Outcomes

Currently projected savings and revenue outcomes as of 9 January 2024

	24/25		25/26		26/27		Total
Stream	Savings	Income	Savings	Income	Savings	Income	
Environment	100K	1.055M	150K	103K	1.75M	-	£3.158 million
Leisure & Economy	146K	100K	-	-	210K	515K	£1.171 million
Asset	300K	-	-	-	-	-	£0.3 million
Housing	-	-	-	-	200K	-	£0.2 million
Corporate	143K	-	-	-	-	-	£0.143 million
Total Portfolio	689K	1.155M	150K	103K	2.16M	515K	£4.772 million

Summary of Fit for the Future Financial Outcomes

Currently projected net budget outcomes as of 9 January 2024

Stream	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
Environment	1.155M	253K	1.75M	£3.158 million
Leisure & Economy	246K	-	725K	£1.171 million
Asset	300K	-	-	£0.3 million
Housing	-	-	200K	£0.2 million
Corporate	143K	-	-	£0.143 million
Total Portfolio	2.044M	253K	2.675M	£4.772 million

Delivery of Fit for the Future (particularly later year savings) will require investment. Rather than building one-off investment into the Budget, proposals have been put forward for a Fit for the Future Reserve from a Reserve rationalisation.

Waste Services Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	£1.055M	£103K	N/A
Savings Target	N/A	N/A	£1M
Investment	None	None	£TBC

Owner: Rosa Tanfield

Description: Continue to be a leader in waste and recycling collections, ensuring that the Council is compliant with emerging Government waste reforms and setting out a plan to be more effective and efficient, whilst looking at new income opportunities, building on existing services that the Council provides.

	Project Manager	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Garden Waste Chargeable Service	John Kellett	Implementation Jan-24			
Creation of Waste Strategy	Rosa Tanfield	Draft strategy to E&S Panel Mar-24	Full council sign-off by Oct-24		
Delivery of Waste Strategy	Rosa Tanfield			Implementation ongoing	
Business Waste Service Expansion	Rosa Tanfield		Implementation		

- Garden Waste Scheme: New revenue from subscription fees 2024/25 - £955K; 2025/2026 - £103K
- Business Waste Service: New revenue from increased business 2024/25 - £100K
- Creation and Delivery of Waste Strategy: 2026/27 - £1M

Environment Stream: Waste Programme

SRO: Rosa Tanfield

Project	Garden Waste Chargeable Service		John Kellett
Description	A new opt-in chargeable garden waste service was launched in January 2024 as part of our Fit for the Future programme to bring in additional year on year income to the help close the budget gap. The new service has brought efficiencies within the service by rolling out a full wheeled bin collection for all residents, instead of the previous mix of sacks and bins. Not only do the wheeled bins bring collection efficiencies, but also aims to reduce staff sickness due to muscular/skeletal injuries and therefore a reduction in agency costs. In addition, financial support was provided to those that need it most, through a discount scheme for residents in receipt of Local Council Tax Support.		
Planned Activity	Continue to develop and delivery further self-serve options, such as 'Home Move' and 'My bin is lost/broken'		
Key Milestones	<p>Launch of Garden Waste scheme 15-Jan-24</p> <p>Price review 2025/26, autumn/winter 2024</p> <p>Renewals for existing residents, March/April 2025</p>		
Staff Impact	The previous garden waste service used 5.25 trucks and crews. With the new paid for service, three crews will be used, later expanding to four if needed. Some of the remaining trucks and crews will be used to help with flat collections, where there's a lot of work. The rest of the crews, initially two and later one, will be moved to fill empty jobs in the team, replacing temporary workers if necessary. The Council has job openings for Senior Operatives and Team Leaders, and the plan is to put these crews into those positions, reducing the need for redundancies.		
Investment Requirement	Capital budget has already been approved for purchase of vehicles and wheeled bins.		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reputational risk: "garden tax" -Operational delivery challenges 	<p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clear and comprehensive communication plan -Data-led and best practice informed decision making -Whole-Council approach to project delivery, with risks and issues logs to manage and mitigate through robust project planning, management and delivery 	
Financial Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £955K net revenue increase 2024/25 • £103K net revenue increase 2025/26 	What does this mean?	<p>2024/25 - This is made up by additional (gross) income of £1.246m from the new scheme. This additional customer and client receipt income is calculated on the basis of £1.896M, less £650K (of which £50K is attributed to a reduction in credit claim income under Grants and Reimbursements)</p> <p>2025/26 - This is based on additional income on the base budget for further potential new customers, if existing customers renew)</p>

Project	Creation and Delivery of Waste Strategy		Rosa Tanfield
	Waste Strategy for Colchester		
Description	The development and delivery of a new Waste Strategy for Colchester, in response to central government guidance, the Environment Protection Act, the Environment Act 2021, the 25-year Environment Plan and other relevant legislation, strategies and policies. The aim is to deliver value for money, provide a safe, compliant, and resilient service, have a community asset based approach and minimise the impact on the environment. Running alongside this, waste reforms emerging from the Environment Act 2021 will see all residents and businesses being required to be consistent in the way they present recycling and waste materials for collection, and the way that Councils are funded to deliver waste collection services will change.		
Planned Activity	Review what we currently do and how we do it; draft a new Waste Strategy in winter/spring 2024; prepare for waste reform changes coming from the Environment Act 2021 imminent/April 2026 (flat food waste collections).		
Key Milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2024: Draft Waste Strategy for Colchester at Environment & Sustainability Panel • Summer 2024: Public consultation on Waste Strategy • Autumn/Winter 2024: Ratification of Waste Strategy for Colchester • Winter 2024 onwards: Implementation of Waste Strategy for Colchester <p>There will be also be major changes to food waste, plastic films and flexible plastics collections through the Waste reforms, Environment Act 2021.</p>		
Staff Impact	Additional internal capacity (project management) to deliver the strategy and changes will be needed. There is likely to be further staffing required at the launch of changes to support operational delivery. Some of this may be funded from DEFRA. Staffing levels and roles will be reviewed to deliver the strategy and waste reform aims and objectives.		
Investment Requirement	The strategy and option modelling will clearly set out the investment requirements of any proposals. This is still to be determined and will be dependent on the option agreed. Additional one-off funding will be needed to provide capacity to launch the changes. DEFRA have indicated new capital burden funding for the Waste reforms, Environment Act 2021 but the Council is requesting a review of the allocation to better reflect the operational need/requirement. Funding will be capital for new equipment, transitional to help with the launch and ongoing.		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational risk from the public on the changes being made to their waste collections • Inability to launch the changes to the timeframe • Significant capital investment required 	<p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication strategies will be vital, as can already be seen through the results of the communication strategy with the garden waste changes. Additional mitigation will be determined as the strategy is drawn up. • Additional one-off funding will be needed to provide capacity to launch the changes • Seek advice from experts to minimise spend and risk • Data-led and best practice informed decision making • Whole-Council approach to project delivery, with risks and issues logs to manage and mitigate through robust project planning, management and delivery 	
Financial Outcomes	Aim for £1M net revenue decrease in budget 2026/27	What does this mean?	This could result in the way that residents put out recycling and waste material and the frequency that they do this being different. Fleet and service roles may also change.

Environment Stream: Waste Programme

SRO: Rosa Tanfield

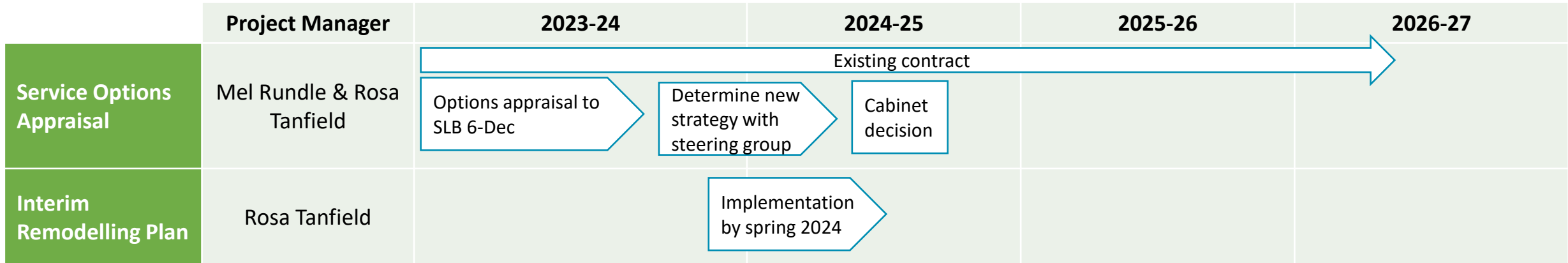
Project	Business Waste Service Expansion		Rosa Tanfield
Description	Waste reforms emerging from the Environment Act 2021 will see all businesses being required to be consistent in the way they present recycling and waste materials for collection. These changes and with the opportunity to build on the existing Business Waste Service, it is proposed that a business plan is created to expand the current service to enhance local businesses' waste management options, support compliance and to provide enhanced income and commercial opportunities.		
Planned Activity	Development and ratification of business plan spring / summer 2024		
Key Milestones	Spring/Summer 24: Ratification of Business Waste service proposal Autumn/Winter 24: Launch of extended Business Waste service		
Staff Impact	An additional crew will be required to service the new routes which will be funded from the new service offer by the additional income generated. The sales and process changes will require capacity from existing staff that will need to reprioritise other work unless additional capacity can be found. Commitment will need to be provided from our Marketing and Comms team to push the promotion of the service.		
Risks and Mitigation	Risks: -Public Perception -New vehicles is not available for operational launch -Inability to launch to timeline -Operational challenges	Mitigation: -Clear and comprehensive communication plan -Data-led and best practice informed decision making -Whole-Council approach to project delivery, with risks and issues logs to manage and mitigate through robust project planning, management and delivery	
Investment Requirement	Capital funding has already been agreed for new vehicle		
Financial Outcomes	Aim for £100K net revenue increase 2025/26	What does this mean?	We expect to see the current Business Waste Service expand and increase income generation and commercial opportunities

Greening & Street Care Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	N/A	N/A	N/A
Savings Target	£100K	£150K	£750K
Investment	TBC	TBC	TBC

Owner: Mel Rundle & Rosa Tanfield

Description: Reviewing what we do and how, in relation to functions and activities to do with grounds maintenance and street care and safety across the whole Council, and to consider and agree new ways of working, at the end of the current grounds maintenance contract, that achieve the objectives as set out below.



Programme Objectives

- Ensure functions, initiatives and activities (particularly those that are statutory), are affordable and delivered within the allocated financial budget
- Deliver fit for the future services that match the changing needs of Colchester
- Work with partners and communities in a different way going forward

Environment Stream: Greening & Street Care Programme

SRO: Mel Rundle & Rosa Tanfield

Project	Interim Remodelling Plan		Mel Rundle/Rosa Tanfield
Description	<p>Create and deliver a service plan for the next 2-3 years that runs concurrently to the review of our approach to maintaining our streets and green spaces (set out on the next page), to realign the service for any possible agreed changes, whilst also ensuring that during that period the service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers within the financial envelope – ensure all street care and safety initiatives and services are executed within the allocated financial resources. This could mean reducing operating costs by reducing service standard, removing Council assets that need to be maintained, changes to contracted work, and staffing reductions, as well as improving commercial income. • Proactiveness – Proactively address street care issues before they escalate, promoting a cleaner and safer environment. This means identifying efficiencies and could mean prioritising cyclical and urgent work over non-urgent tasks. • Partnerships – collaborate with various stakeholders to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of street care services. This could extend to private sector partnerships, such as that already in place with Waste Investigations Support and Enforcement (WISE). • Communities – foster a sense of community pride and engagement through clean and safe public spaces. This could mean greater focus on increasing volunteer activities, e.g. our existing Litter Warrior scheme. • Environmental impact – minimise the environmental footprint of street care operations and contribute to sustainability goals. This could mean looking a route optimisation, electrification of fleet and equipment, and reducing landfill for example. 		
Planned Activity	<p>Staff consultation currently underway with Sweeper drivers on 1 full time equivalent staffing reduction, and agreement already given to reducing 1.4 full time equivalent Operative roles.</p>		
Key Milestones	<p>Review what we currently do, who and how we do it, and benchmarking against others in winter/spring 2024; talk to our stakeholders in spring 2024; launch spring/summer 2024; Subject to any changes to job descriptions and staffing numbers or consultation required, this will launch spring/summer 2024</p>		
Staff Impact	<p>Circa 60 staff are employed by CCC; Planned activity currently is underway to reduce the overall team by 2.4 full time equivalents. Further exploration and plans for service delivery could consider contracting works and/or reducing service standards, requiring less directly employed staff over the 2-3 year period, as well as seasonal only contracted staff. Staff impact cannot be fully determined until finalisation of the plan.</p>		
Investment Requirement	<p>Investment requirement cannot be determined until the final service plan has been agreed.</p>		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>All risks will be measured through the exploration of the service plan and will be presented in detail as part of the final proposal, but could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to how parts of our city will look over the year • Reputational risk from the public regarding public spaces and how they are managed and maintained • Potential redundancy costs 	<p>Mitigation could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A contingency plan will be developed to address unforeseen challenges, including a phased implementation approach to minimize disruptions. • Communication and behaviour change activity will be key to success. • Training and redeployment options will be explored • Seek advice from experts to minimise spend and risk 	
Financial Outcomes	<p>Aim for £100K net revenue decrease 2024/25 Aim for £150K net revenue decrease 2025/26</p>	What does this mean?	<p>We expect to see some redesign of staff structure and roles including a possible reduction, an increase in some income generation, and changes to our contracted spend.</p>

Environment Stream: Greening & Street Care Programme

SRO: Mel Rundle & Rosa Tanfield

Project	Service Options Appraisal	Mel Rundle/Rosa Tanfield
Description	Reviewing what we do and how, to determine the skills required to take a new approach to maintaining our streets and green spaces. Instead of having resource in CCC, contractors, and CBH the intent is to have multi-skilled operatives and align service delivery across the whole city in the most efficient way. This could be a variety of models, which could include a community-enabling approach in some areas and will ensure a more sustainable service that is fit for the future. This may impact how parts of our city will look over the seasons, with longer periods between grass cuts for example but we will continue to work hard to ensure the city looks welcoming for residents and visitors.	
Planned Activity	Review what we currently do and who does it in spring 2024; different service delivery options exploration in spring/summer 2024; talking to our stakeholders in summer/autumn 2024	
Key Milestones	Options appraisal: Committee review and recommendations to Cabinet – Sep/Oct 2024 Detailed proposal: Cabinet and council sign-off – by December 2024 Implementation plan: Implementation plan with phased timelines – delivered by October 2026	
Staff Impact	Circa 40 staff employed by the contractor (TUPE implications), circa 60 staff at CCC but ultimately the staff impact cannot be determined until the final service option decision has been reached.	
Investment Requirement	Investment requirement cannot be determined until the final service option decision has been reached however some capital investment for tools and machinery will be required for any in-house service as well as investment in some CCC owned sites to ensure they are fit for purpose.	
Risks and Mitigation	All risks will be measured through the exploration of the service options and will be presented in detail as part of the final proposal, but could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to how parts of our city will look over the seasons • Reputational risk from the public regarding public open spaces and how they are managed and maintained • TUPE implications as well as potential redundancy costs • Potential significant capital investment, subject to the final service option decision 	Mitigation could include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A contingency plan will be developed to address unforeseen challenges, including a phased implementation approach to minimize disruptions. • Communication and behaviour change activity will be key to success. • Training and redeployment options will be explored • Seek advice from experts to minimise spend and risk
Financial Outcomes	Aim for £750K net budget decrease 2026/27	What does this mean? We expect to see a reduction in contract spend, a redesign of staff structure and roles including a possible reduction and income generation opportunities

Culture & Heritage Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	£100K	TBC	TBC
Savings Target	£120K	TBC	TBC
Investment	TBC	TBC	TBC

Owner: Frank Hargrave

Description: Provide a more efficient and entrepreneurial museum service

	Project Manager	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Delivery Model Review	Frank Hargrave	Options analysis/ consultation to reach agreement by Oct-24 or accept cultural exemption			
Hollytrees	Frank Hargrave		Options analysis		
Natural History Museum	Frank Hargrave	Options analysis and consultation	NLHF application – May '24	Development phase to RIBA 4 (if NLHF successful)	NLHF Round 2 app and delivery

- Delivery model options are being considered to achieve the savings target; however, these may have other implications and costs.
- Other options such as Cultural Exemption on admissions at the castle may achieve similar savings more swiftly and without investment/significant risk
- Charging for admission at Hollytrees - estimated £100k income based on 20k visitors initially at £5 per head, (estimating an initial 50% drop) will be special offers as part of Castle entry and for returning customers.
- NLHF funding application being made in May 2024 with the aim of delivering a c.£5m redevelopment of the Natural History Museum.

Leisure & Economy Stream: Culture & Heritage Programme

SRO: Frank Hargrave

Project	Museums Delivery Model Review	Frank Hargrave
Description	Review exploring a new independent organisation, Charitable Trust/CIC or similar. Savings need to be balanced with new and additional governance and accounting requirements of a Trust. The new Trust would require time and investment to setup however it would provide further opportunities for fundraising and greater flexibility.	
Planned Activity	Production of a delivery model options appraisal including cultural exemption. Consultation with key stakeholders including Ipswich Council for finalisation of delivery model proposal.	
Key Milestones	Complete options appraisal Decision on delivery model Consultation with Ipswich Museums Staff consultation Cabinet Oct-2024	
Staff Impact	There are 65 FTE across Colchester and Ipswich museums. No change in staffing levels for museum service is expected but possible TUPE to new Trust as well as a review of skills and training needed.	
Investment Requirement	Investment requirement cannot be determined until the final service option decision has been reached	
Risks and Mitigation	Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reputational damage, miscalculation of finances, break up of partnership with IBC and loss of ACE funding 	Mitigation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due planning and engagement of appropriate specialists. Consultation with partners/funders
Financial Outcomes	£120K savings in 2025/26, if cultural exemption not taken up in 24/25	What does this mean? It is not anticipated that the model of museum delivery will impact the service

Additional activity under this programme includes PwC being commissioned for:

- Assessment of the viability of cultural exemption on Castle admissions. This would bring savings of ~£120K but would lower the VAT exempt threshold of the Council from c.£1.4m p.a. to c.£800,000 p.a. so has wider implications that need to be considered.
- Challenge HMRC on Non-Business Supplies, as was done for Leisure World. May take several years to complete but PwC estimate a potential rebate of more than £500K and future VAT savings.

Leisure & Economy Stream: Culture & Heritage Programme

SRO: Frank Hargrave

Project	Hollytrees Admission Charging		Frank Hargrave
Description	Charging for admission to the Hollytrees Museum.		
Planned Activity	Pricing structure developed following benchmarking. Admission will start at £5 for an adult with family offers and joint ticketing options with the castle		
Key Milestones	Delivery by Apr-24		
Staff Impact	None		
Investment Requirement	Under review – c.£10k		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction of visitors to the museum following introduction of charges. - Reputational damage 	<p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An estimation of income of between £80,000 to £100,000 p.a. (in part dependent on VAT exemption) is based upon the halving of visitor numbers from 40,000 p.a. to 20,000. Learning from the wider sector implies the impact to visitor numbers is the same irrespective of the charge so low entry charges would be inadvisable. In mitigation the team is improving signage and adding trails, dress-up activities etc to help improve the visitor offer. 	
Financial Outcomes	£100K revenue 2024/25	What does this mean?	Hollytrees Museum will no longer be a free resource for our communities.

Active and Wellbeing Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	TBC	TBC	£515k
Savings Target	£26K	TBC	£210k
Investment	-	£500k capital	-

Owner: Rory Doyle

Description: To transform the public sector sport and leisure model so that is financially sustainable and contributes to reduction in health inequalities and supports integrated working with system partners in relation to estate and service delivery.

	Project Manager	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Service Model Redesign	Rory Doyle		Discovery to Sep-24	1-year Planning phase	Delivery phase
Interim Transition	Rory Doyle			Medium term transition	
Gladstone	Adam Britton		£20K savings 24-25		
Digi Ticket	Adam Britton		£6K savings 24-25		

- £26k of savings relate to contract negotiations for systems in use within the service with no service impact.
- A staffing restructure currently underway will provide the foundations for community health and wellbeing being at the heart of sports and leisure service delivery.
- The delivery of our new service model is a long-term multi-year programme. We will collaborate with communities to change how our services and teams serve our people, be less dependent on formal offers, and tackle health inequalities to ensure that active wellbeing becomes an integral and valued contributor to the wider health and care system.

Leisure & Economy Stream: Active & Wellbeing Programme

SRO: Rory Doyle

Project	Sport and Leisure Service Review		Adam Britton
Description	As part of our ongoing development of sports and leisure services, we are implementing changes to our team structure to ensure the service is fit for future users and provide opportunity for additional income streams. These changes set the foundations for delivering a new service model to put community health and wellbeing at the heart of the vision and delivery of our sport and leisure service. This new approach increases our presence in the community, participation levels for all user groups in Colchester, greater partnership working with national governing bodies, community groups and schools. In addition, contract negotiations for systems currently in use within the service will deliver £26k savings with no service impact.		
Planned Activity	Staff consultation currently underway.		
Key Milestones	Implementation of new service structure, and recruitment to new roles – from April 2024 Procurement of new equipment – by April 2025 Installation of new equipment - 2025		
Staff Impact	The structure being implemented by April 2024 will largely provide the new roles anticipated for the next three years, however the new ways of working are likely to result in greater effectiveness and efficiencies. Services also may need to be reviewed and refined in response to customer need.		
Investment Requirement	There is a required capital investment in 25/26 of £500k, in addition to other grant monies already being pursued.		
Risks and Mitigation	Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Successful recruitment to team structure - Fluctuating energy and supplier costs - Not achieving income levels needed on memberships 	Mitigation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upskilling where appropriate, use of agency workers - Use different suppliers where we can, aim for lower energy use - A specialist consultant has completed an income analysis with reasonable assumptions has been taken and confidence levels are high. 	
Financial Outcomes	£725k target net budget reduction for 26/27 (£515k income growth, £100k Premises savings from energy efficiencies, £60k employees, £50k between supplies/grants)	What does this mean?	We expect to see a reduction in system spend, a staff restructure which brings efficiencies and increase in income generation. This new health and wellbeing approach will help to tackle health inequalities in our city and mean we are a valued contributor to the wider health and care system.

Housing Stream: HRA Review Programme

SRO: Lindsay Barker

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			

Project	Housing Revenue Account Assessment	Lindsay Barker
Description	Review of our Housing offer and delivery model (to be planned in stages over 3 years)	
Planned Activity	Development of a long-term plan to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and the future sustainability of our housing offer, beginning with an assessment and reset of the future use of our Housing Revenue Account.	
Key Milestones	Strategic assessment of the HRA to be planned and commissioned by April 2024 to underpin future plan (timescales for completion TBD)	
Staff Impact (FTE)	No direct impact from the review, although there may be impacts arising from the review	
Investment Requirement	TBC	
Risks and Mitigation	Risk: That the HRA business plan is unsustainable	Mitigation: The review will identify mitigating actions
Financial Outcomes	The aim of the review is to result in a financially viable business plan for the management of our housing stock.	

Housing Stream: Housing Provision Programme

SRO: Philip Sullivan

Project	Homelessness Prevention		Philip Sullivan
Description	Development of a long-term plan to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and the future sustainability of our housing offer, beginning with an assessment and reset of the future use of our Housing Revenue Account.		
Planned Activity	This is an emerging programme of transformation work with activity at various stages of development. The new Housing Board already established and chaired by Rory Doyle connects the Health and Well Being Alliance and will provide better governance and partnership working opportunities. The Housing Delivery Plan will generate additional projects that will be assessed by the new Board arrangements.		
Key Milestones	New approach to strategic oversight of housing functions determined from late Dec-23		
Staff Impact (FTE)	Staff impact currently being scoped as this involves staff across CBH and CCC		
Investment Requirement	TBC		
Risks and Mitigation	Risk: Further increased in homelessness	Mitigation: The review will identify solutions to further increases in homelessness	
Financial Outcomes	£200K savings 2026/27		

Assets Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	N/A	TBC	TBC
Savings Target	£300K	TBC	TBC
Investment	N/A	TBC	TBC

Owner: Patricia Barry

Description: Develop an Assets strategy aligned to strategic plan and business goals, ensuring property is maintained effectively and that regeneration, climate change and place-making objectives are realised, and commercial and income generation opportunities are promoted. Develop an asset strategy, policy and delivery model that ensure we make the most of our assets.

	Project Manager	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Asset Management Plan	Patricia Barry		Cabinet decision	Delivery	
Corporate Landlord Model	Stephen Nash		TUPE	Service redesign	

- The focus of this programme is less on the assets themselves and more on identifying a clear plan that enables Colchester to understand and leverage the whole estate, making sound financial and risk-based decisions, in partnership with other organisations
- Heritage asset management – Colchester has a large portfolio for the size of the authority and is a huge liability.
- There is significant potential for capital receipts to enable broader organisational change and this will require investment.

Assets Programme

Savings or income breakdown and detail

- 2024/25 - £300k saving from the design of our Corporate Landlord service.
- Work with services (as part of other transformation areas) to identify savings or income generation relating to assets under those programmes according to the gap identified and in line with strategic approach.
- Plan for future years impact – work to begin immediately to understand discovery data and the following opportunities;
 - **Cut spend** – unlikely that this will be in relation to works due to annual under-investment, however:
 - Potential reduction in costs of borrowing if disposals of surplus/cost inefficient properties identified and capital receipt used for reinvestment rather than using capital borrowings
 - Efficiency programme for building usage to reduce/control running costs
 - Review vacant properties and strategic hold assets – there will be costs associated with security etc
 - Strategic investment in properties identified for long term retention to enable use of capital rather than use of revenue in ‘ad-hoc’ approach to spend
 - **Stop income loss:** investment in stock, particularly those that are generating income is essential. Also review marketing of vacant commercial portfolio
 - **Increase income (immediate and future opportunities):** review the use of access to capital in relation to the investment strategy e.g. opportunities for secure income stream from provision of facilities that support health provision – primary care, intermediate housing, community located health provision
 - **Use of capital:** does capital expenditure always support economic growth or lead to reduction in revenue?

Assets Programme

People - current and projected

- Complete picture of property related staffing numbers is unknown, but a forensic cost analysis of the ledger will identify all resources, including staff numbers, that are involved in estate matters
- The Corporate Landlord structure is in development

Estimating Confidence levels

- High

Key Risks

- The organisation does not consider the current and future risk and cost of the estate through the lens of the financial sustainability of the council (once the relevant data has been gathered and analysed)
- Competing political and operational drivers for capital investment or property related decisions
- Investment is not forthcoming to develop business cases for projects that are specifically linked to revenue reduction or income generation projects e.g. New Crematorium, Energy production - Heat Networks/Solar Farm, Town Hall
- Continuing volatility of the property market will affect assumptions around time, cost, and open market valuations for business cases therefore contingency will need to be included in all cases
- Speed of deterioration of the estate continues to impact on income, unexpected cost and reputational damage

Assets Programme

Next Steps	Status
Implement Corporate Landlord – already approved at Cabinet	In progress
New governance structure to be established to ensure member engagement, transparency of decision making, strategic understanding and planning of the Estate	Implementation mid Feb
Service and organisational engagement regarding culture change that the Corporate Landlord will deliver	Ongoing
Forensic cost analysis of the ledger to provide accurate visibility of costs of the estate	Completion end Feb
Commercial estate analysis – risk and identification of opportunities	Completion end Feb
Detailed stock condition survey to include 15–20-year life cycle costings to support financial planning beyond the current MTFF	Complete end March
3-year action plan for the estate (developed under delegated authority due to timing of receipt of stock condition data)	Complete early March
Any new capital project that negatively impacts the financial liability of CCC, until approval of the Strategic Estate Plan must be exceptional, new gateway process following capital review must be strictly adhered to and wider strategic impact considered as part of the business plan	Ongoing
As per CIPFA recommendations, Estate Plan (Strategy/Policy) drafted, with submission to Scrutiny in February and Cabinet in March	In progress
Develop business cases where there are revenue reduction implications or income generation opportunities only	In progress
Further discussion with Health Care Alliance regarding use of council capital to support projects for secure revenue returns	Ongoing
Integrated working with Amphora events team in relation to the Estate Plan	In progress
Strategic review of all Heritage Assets to be undertaken following receipt of condition surveys	March start

Corporate Stream: Shared Services

SRO: Richard Block

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			✓

Building the resilience of our organisation through shared services. A joint Shared Services Executive Board has been established and a programme director is in place leading the work to fully maximise the benefits we know shared service working can bring. The programme has a clear vision to share 'back office' services across the three councils, including:

- HR
- Revs and Bens
- Finance
- ICT
- PMO (Project Management Office)



**shared
services**

Braintree . Colchester . Epping



Organisational resilience – We all carry numerous vacant posts and find it difficult to recruit the right staff for the future. Working in partnership we can be more resilient by sharing services, sharing key posts, attracting the right people.



Improving capacity and agility – Specialists posts can be shared rather than a reliance upon agency staff and Suppliers. Peaks and troughs in workload can be dealt with through improved capacity and sharing of common processes and policies.



Staff retention and development – There is the opportunity to develop some bigger/challenging roles across the partnership that will underpin our ability to retain key staff. Investing in staff development will be a key part of service design.



Aligning and developing best practice – The co-design of services will enable us to build upon strengths, significantly improve common pain points and lead to a one-off change in delivery through the alignment towards shared service best practice.



Service efficiency – We will co-design more efficient services by designing out pain points whilst at the same time dealing with frustrations of staff with existing service delivery models.



Shaping our own future in Essex – Three strategically aligned partners can move quickly enough to co-design shared services now. This way we are in control of service delivery models.



Improve the customer journey – This programme presents us with a step-change (one-off) opportunity to co-design services around Customer needs.

Corporate Stream: Shared Services

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
	✓		✓

Additional to the main programme

SRO: Richard Block

Project	Building Control		Andrew Tyrrell
Description	Proposal for a shared management structure with one or more local authorities. Key enabler is to have a high-quality Team Leader beneath a shared Service Manager, freeing the manager to align service operations and best practices, customer relationships, income, budgets, workforce planning, training and development. The right Team Leader could reduce the degree of geographical dependency for this role as they would be engaged daily, locally. Shared management would benefit from shared policies, pricing, systems, and practices and be a key role to take best practices from each local authority and encourage a unified team.		
Planned Activity	Team Leader role currently being advertised for Colchester		
Key Milestones	Recruitment of local Team Leader post		
Staff Impact (FTE)	0.5 FTE Service Manager post		
Risks and Challenges	<p>Risks:</p> <p>Success of shared service management is dependent on ability to recruit a sufficiently experienced Team Leader.</p> <p>Progression timeline dependent on Team Leader recruitment.</p> <p>The arrangement would make people highly desirable to other recruiters</p>	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>Market conditions are uncertain at present, affected by 1-Apr-24 Building Safety Regulator "Registration" requirements</p> <p>IT systems in place at participating authorities, whether cost, lifespan, functionality</p>	
Financial Outcome	£43K savings 2024/25		

Corporate Stream: Future Workforce Programme

SRO: Jess Douglas

Our workforce will be critical to the delivery of the Fit for Future transformation portfolio. Our workforce will need/to be:

- Ready for significant change
- Lean but sustainable
- Inclusive leadership
- Diverse and inclusive
- Agile and resilient
- Highly skilled
- Model our core values and demonstrate personal leadership
- Embrace system working and shared services
- Digitally and data enabled



Future Workforce Programme

SRO: Jess Douglas

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			✓

What this means:

Approach:

Sustainable

Establishment is affordable within the council’s budget; work is achievable, fulfilling, and long hours are not the norm.
 Core workforce, with ability to bring in additional interim capacity and expertise.
 Staff are fulfilled, quality of work life is positive, and needs are being met.

- FFF Change Management Policy Review
- Change Management Leadership Programme
- Service workforce/organisational development plans

Agile and Resilient

Workforce will be supported to adapt and thrive in a constantly changing environment, by focusing on people’s wellbeing, physical and mental health
 Utilising skills and sharing knowledge across the council, systems and partnerships.

- Wellbeing strategy
- Enabling more movement across the council to re-deploy staff where needed and support career aspiration
- Formal mentoring and buddying system

Inclusive

Increased diversity and good representation across the council against each protected characteristic.
 Workforce reflective of our communities
 EDI embedded in every workforce activity

- New EDI Strategy linked to LGA equalities framework
- Reverse mentoring
- EDI KPIs and monitoring

Future Skills

What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means and impact to services

- Skills taskforce to identify future skills
- Skills audit and gap analysis
- L&D plans linked to priorities
- Career pathways
- Digital skills

Future Workforce Programme

SRO: Jess Douglas

What this means:

Leadership

Lead transformation positively and collaboratively understanding and managing the impact of change on people
Continually model the council's core values
Be committed to leading a diverse workforce and promoting inclusion

System working /shared service opportunities

Build on existing and forge new partnerships, work collaboratively to realise the opportunities that shared services can bring; resilience, improving capacity, building relationships, retaining staff, service efficiencies and improved customer journey.

Approach:

- Leadership development programme aligned to strategic priorities, core values and transformation
 - Future leaders' talent management programme
 - New leaders' induction programme
-
- Introduce a framework to support the delivery of future shared services:
 - Business case development, models of delivery, culture development, change process, staff involvement and engagement plan.

Corporate Stream: Digital Customer Programme

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			✓

SRO: Mel Kemp-Salt

Project	Website Replacement Project		
Description	Replace existing extranet, intranet, and microsite platforms at Colchester City and Epping Forest District Council and deliver a platform that is readily usable and adoptable by further partners. Transform website content to provide clear, concise information and simple, consistent self-service options.		
Planned Activity	Project brief is with key stakeholders for contribution		
Key Milestones	<p>Project timeline assessment is expected to deliver the project over 24 months. The expected path to a phased service by service implementation is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 03/2024 - Go out to procurement framework (budget/resources agreed) 05/2024 - Sign-off procurement and secure delivery partner 06/2024 - Develop project requirements and Statement of Works 07/2024 - Commence project deliverables 		
Staff Impact (FTE)	No expected staff reduction however there may be efficiencies realised in related services.		
Investment Requirement	To be determined through project planning and procurement frameworks		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not able to provide a platform that underpins modern customer expectations If services are unable to engage with the new site redesign and content review then there will be delays in the project completion 	<p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market research indicates this is low risk Early engagement, agreed web standards in line with, workshopping content, re-use of best practice content 	
Financial Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital investment will be required to fund the project 	What does this mean?	Increased web accessibility, better navigation

Corporate Stream: Digital Customer Programme

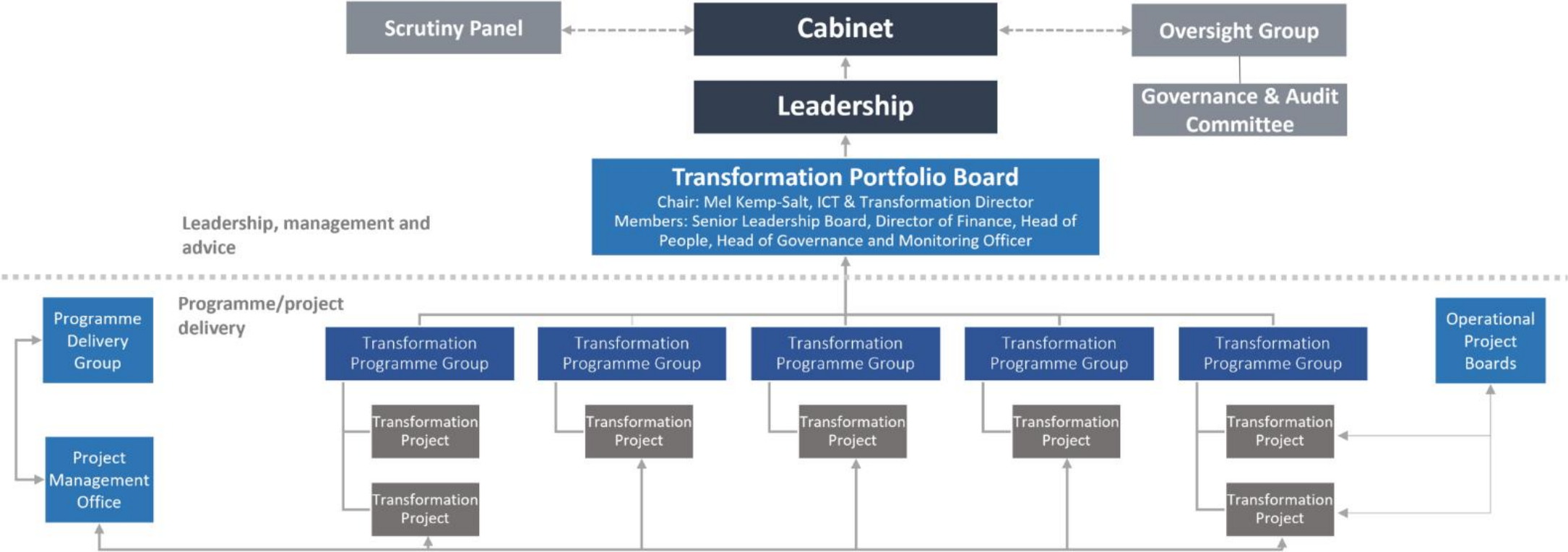
SRO: Mel Kemp-Salt

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			✓

Project	Channel Experience with Contact Centre		Sam Preston
Description	Reviewing what we do and how we do it to adapt our service to make sure we're fit for the future and meet our customers' needs. This includes reviewing customer journeys to maximise channel shift, which would result in requiring less staff resource and create budget savings in 24/25. This may impact how customers perceive our contact service, with longer response times on the phone however we will work hard to provide better experiences across other digital channels. Future years' service improvement will be dependent on delivery of digital systems.		
Planned Activity	Iterative changes to rebalance the level of service provision across all channels in a test and learn approach, reducing telephony hours to allow better email and self-serve response times and service experience; exploring use of other more efficient digital contact channels; refocus performance indicators and targets away from time taken to first contact resolution; improved use of telephone messaging to direct customers to self-serve options; establish a relationship with Epping customer services to explore options/solutions together.		
Key Milestones	Iterative service adaptations – from January '24 Customer self-serve platforms in place - TBC Web improvements (delivered by the Website Replacement Project) - TBC Redesign the customer service delivery model and optimise alternative contact channels - TBC		
Staff Impact (FTE)	32.58 FTE currently, we expect a reduction of 3-4 FTE that will be achieved through natural attrition and end of fixed term contracts		
Investment Requirement	No specific investment expected, however there will be some dependency on wider projects within digital customer which will require investment		
Risks and Mitigation	Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced customer satisfaction Longer telephony wait times Urgent contacts unable to get through Inability to flex to unexpected demands 	Mitigation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt the changes being made based on customer feedback Reviewing call routing to prioritise more urgent contacts Service design will protect urgent service lines Re-prioritisation of call queues, customer comms as needed 	
Financial Outcomes	£100K net budget reductions 2024/25 achieved through salary savings	What does this mean?	Focusing resources where needed, and improving the experience of our residents interacting with our digital services

Fit for the Future Governance Framework

The proposed governance structure is intended to ensure good governance, with decisions at the lowest level possible and with oversight from Members and Officers at the highest level. In addition to local governance, some programmes will report to other groups, e.g. North Essex Councils.



Transformation Governance Bodies

Governance Body	Chair/Attendees	Purpose	Frequency
Leadership	Leader & Deputy Leader Portfolio Holders Senior Leadership Board	To oversee the delivery of the transformation portfolio and the achievement of its deliverables. Approve the initial portfolio and any additions (or deletions) from it.	TBC
Oversight Group	Group Leaders PfH Economy, Transformation and Performance, PfH Neighbourhoods and Waste, Chair Governance & Audit Committee, Senior Leadership Team	To build cross-party discourse, understanding and consensus on the portfolio of transformation programmes including management of risk. To be supported by the Director of ICT & Transformation.	TBC
Transformation Portfolio Board	Chair: Mel Kemp-Salt Vice Chair: Andrew Small, Jess Douglas Senior Leadership Board Andrew Weavers Programme SROs	To review progress on the portfolio and ensure issues and risks are addressed, to hold individual projects to account, provide support and guidance to programme project SROs, to recommend the addition and removal of initiatives from the transformation portfolio, and to ensure that the Council's transformation objectives are met. Also, to provide upward reporting to Members Committees and Groups. Streams/programmes/projects can be reviewed by exception however the Transformation Board may wish to review specific areas of concern or interest as needed.	Monthly
Transformation Programme Groups	Programme SRO Project Manager(s) Relevant Officers	Programme-level groups to identify and define potential transformation projects for further consideration and development.	As needed
Transformation Projects	Project Manager Project leads HR & Finance Business Partners	Set up following the identification of transformation opportunities to develop proposals and deliver projects. To be comprised of nominated project manager and leads for the project, along with HR and Finance Business Partners and support from the Project Management Office. To assess the viability of potential transformation projects with a view to establishing business cases and Project Initiation Documents for consideration by the Programme Delivery Board.	Weekly

Transformation Governance Q1 2024

Informal Officer Governance

Senior Leadership Board
Monthly oversight of portfolio

Informal Member Governance

Leadership

Oversight Group
Leader of the Council, Leader of the Labour Group, Leader of the Conservative Group, PFH for Resources, Chair of Scrutiny Panel, Chair of Governance and Audit Committee

Formal Member Governance

Budget **Scrutiny** 23/01/24

Budget **Cabinet** 24/01/24

FFF **Scrutiny Panel** 13/02/24

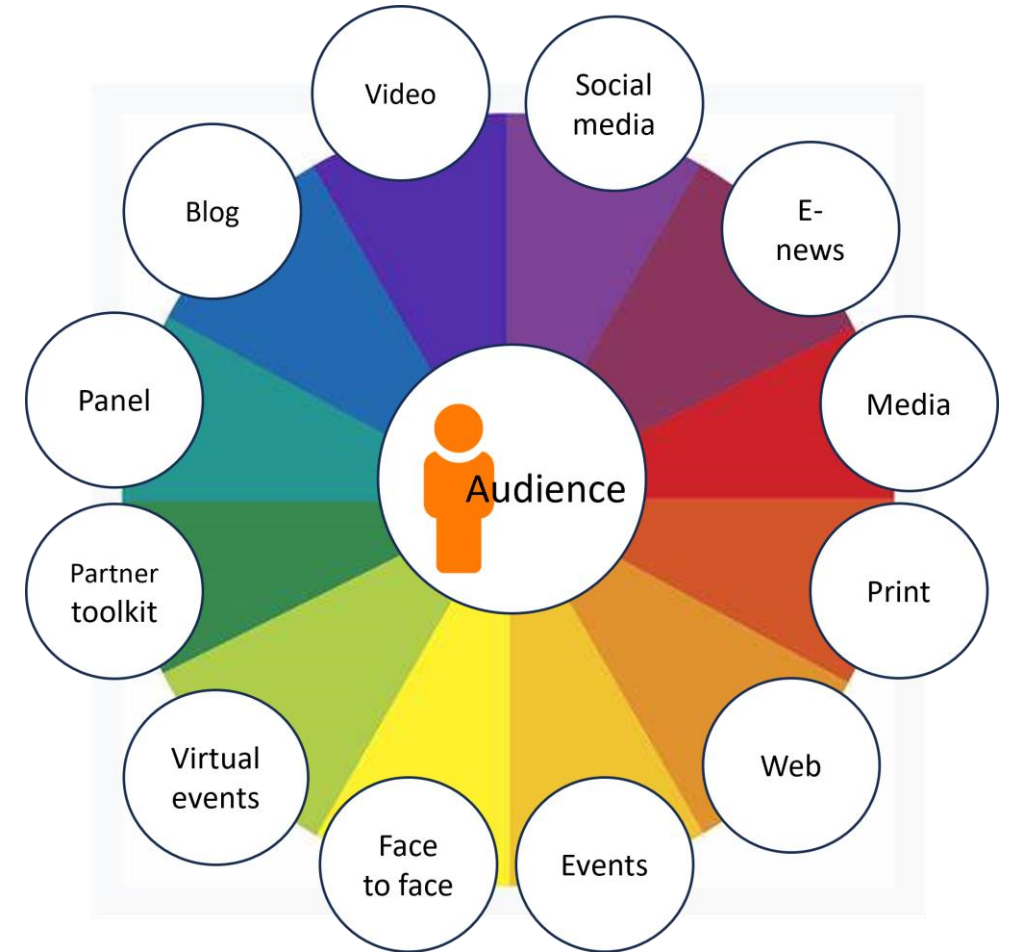
Budget - **Full Council** 21/02/24

FFF **Cabinet** 13/03/24

Fit for the Future: Integrated Communications Strategy

Integrated communications will ensure we deliver consistent message across channels and to residents, staff, members and stakeholders to support the programme objectives, take people on the Fit for the Future journey with us and build trust and loyalty.

It includes who we are talking to, why we are talking to them, how and when we will talk to them, what form of communication the content should take and what channels we should use to share it.



Fit for the Future: Integrated Communications Strategy

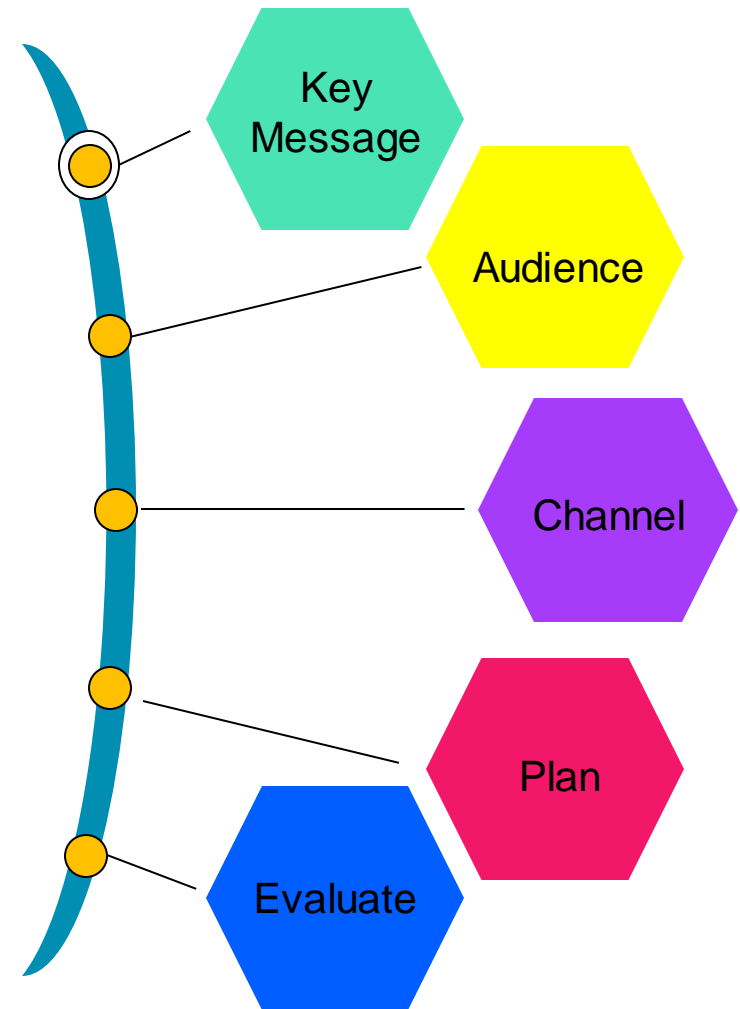
	Key Messages	Approach
External	The budget situation of the organisation, how we are acting through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means and make sure our services are fit for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full communications plan. • Mix of channels appropriate to message, including media, social media, e-news, website and residents’ panel.
Internal	What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means, impact to services and staff, ensuring up to date / timely messages with the ability to ask questions and feed into the process and support for staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full communications plan with monthly focus on work streams. • Mix of channels appropriate to audience e.g. desk based/frontline. • Clear feedback routes.
Members	What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means, impact to services and residents, ensuring up to date and timely messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix of channels appropriate to audience, including networking events, new member induction, regular updates from CEO and Leader and toolkits.
Stakeholders	What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means and impact to services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In person stakeholder briefings for key partners to the council by SLB/SLT/Cabinet • Regular meetings already attended by SLB/SLT/Cabinet.



Fit for the Future Integrated Communications Approach

Purpose

Integrated communications will ensure we deliver consistent message across channels and to residents, staff, members and stakeholders to support the programme objectives, take people on the Fit for the Future journey with us and build trust and loyalty.



Key Messages

- The cost-of-living crisis, alongside the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and rising energy costs have placed significant pressure (of around £6.262 million over the next three years) on the council's budget.
- Our response to this financial challenge must be radical; to close the budget gap and future proof our organisation, we will need to reduce our operating costs by 25 percent over the next three years.
- Colchester City Council has a strong track record of financial management, having saved nearly £16million since 2018, from its net budget of £26million.
- Colchester is not alone in dealing with these pressures. Most councils are facing the same problems. We are in a better position than some, but (like most other councils) we have a substantial structural deficit in our revenue budget.
- Continuing as we are, is not an option. We are working to reset and transform the council to become a leaner, more efficient organisation, doing everything we can to find ways to improve the way we work and deliver services to ensure a stable and secure financial future. This work is called 'Fit for the Future'.

Full list of important messages

- The scale of the financial challenge we face is huge (around £6.262 million over the next three years). The cost-of-living crisis, alongside the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and rising energy costs have placed significant pressure on our budgets and we simply cannot continue to operate as we are.
- Colchester City Council has a strong track record of financial management, having saved nearly £16million since 2018, from its net budget of £26million.
- Colchester is not alone in dealing with these pressures. Most councils are facing the same problems.
- Colchester is in a better position than some, but (like most other councils) we have a substantial structural deficit in our revenue budget. This is why the transformation programme is so important. It will see us reduce our spend, size and scope, making sure we are not overspending.
- Our response to this financial challenge must be radical; to close the budget gap and future proof our organisation, we will need to reduce our operating costs by 25 percent over the next three years.
- To achieve this, we are working to reset and transform the Council to become a leaner, more efficient organisation, doing everything we can to find ways to improve the way we work and deliver services to ensure a stable and secure financial future. The 'Fit for the Future' programme will make sure that we are exactly that; fit for the future of our city, of our organisation and of our communities.
- Whilst this work will help to align us with the Medium-Term Financial Forecast and ensure we are closing the budget gap identified, it will also prepare us for the longer-term financial challenges that lie ahead.
- The programme of work will involve a significant change to many of our residents, communities and partners. The changes we make will have a very visible impact across the city, and we will work to support our residents and businesses through the changes.
- As is our duty, and at the heart of what we do as a local authority, we will continue to do all we can to protect those residents who are the most vulnerable and do what we can to mitigate the impact changes may have on them.
- We will do all that can to support our people through this change, ensuring we live and breathe our core values.

Narrative

Colchester City Council budget pressures explained

We are working to transform our services to ensure we can continue to deliver high-quality services for the people of Colchester.

Like every resident and business in the UK, the cost-of-living crisis, alongside the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, rising energy costs, and the current economic climate, is placing an unprecedented pressure on local authority budgets, and Colchester is no exception.

We are experiencing pressures on our budgets, more than normal

Colchester is not alone in dealing with these pressures. Most councils are facing the same problems. We have a strong track record of financial management, having saved nearly £16million since 2018, from its net budget of £26million.

We have had to identify £5.26million in savings this financial year, with a further estimated £6.262million in savings to over the next three years to ensure our budgets are met. This is something we are legally required to do.

What are the numbers?

The cost-of-living crisis, alongside the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and rising energy costs have placed significant pressure (of around £6.262million) on the council's budget.

These pressures are on top of limited government support and the rise in inflation (peaking at around 11% in 2023) and recent increases to the National Living Wage.

We have had to identify £5.26 million in savings this financial year (2023-24), with a further estimated £6.262million in savings to over the next three years.

Finance officers will continue to review the updated position, and this is a figure that could grow. Cont...

What is the consequence?

Colchester is in a better position than some local authorities, but (like most other councils) we have a substantial structural deficit in our revenue budget.

The scale of the pressures we are facing cannot be met by reducing costs, making efficiencies or raising council tax, like we have in the past. Continuing as we are, is not an option. We need to make some big changes to ensure we can balance the budget. We must transform the way we work.

If we don't transform our organisation, to make sure we are spending within our means, we may, in future, be in a similar position to Thurrock and Birmingham councils and may have to issue a S114 Notice, to let the Government know we will be unable to balance our budget. The issuing of a S114 notice bans all new spending with the exception of protecting vulnerable people and statutory services and pre-existing commitments.

We hope not to get anywhere near that point.

Transformation is our long-term plan

We have already begun to reduce non-essential spending and are working hard to reduce the councils overspend and begin to put the council on the right track for the future.

We have some money in our reserves (like a savings account) that will help us in the short term, but the most important thing is that we are proactively working to ensure we live within our means moving forward.

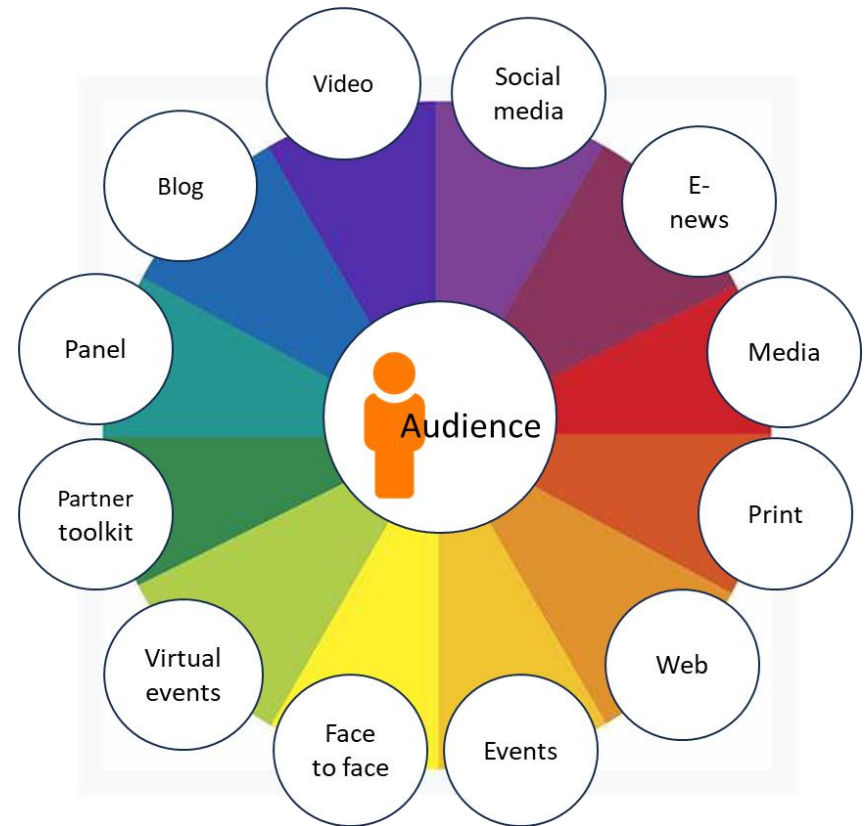
To achieve this, we are working to reset and transform the Council to become a leaner, more efficient organisation, doing everything we can to find ways to improve the way we work and deliver services to ensure a stable and secure financial future. The 'Fit for the Future' programme will make sure that we are exactly that; fit for the future of our city, of our organisation and of our communities.

The plans for how we are going to do this is set out in the Fit for the Future proposals report that is due to be discussed at Cabinet in February 2024.

Approach

This integrated comms approach for Fit for the Future shows you:

- who we are talking to
- why we are talking to them
- how and when we will talk to them
- what form of communication the content should take
- what channels we should use to share it



Audience

Key Messages

Approach

External

The budget situation of the organisation, how we are acting through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means and make sure our services are fit for the future.

- Full communications plan.
- Mix of channels appropriate to message, including media, social media, e-news, website and residents' panel.

Internal

What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means, impact to services and staff, ensuring up to date / timely messages with the ability to ask questions and feed into the process and support for staff.

- Full communications plan with monthly focus on work streams.
- Mix of channels appropriate to audience e.g. desk based/frontline.
- Clear feedback routes.

Members

What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means, impact to services and residents, ensuring up to date and timely messages.

- Mix of channels appropriate to audience, including networking events, new member induction, regular updates from CEO and Leader and toolkits.

Stakeholders

What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means and impact to services.

- In person stakeholder briefings for key partners to the council by SLB/SLT/Cabinet
- Regular meetings already attended by SLB/SLT/Cabinet.

Communication Goal	Communication Method	Audience	Frequency	Owner
Narrative and positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website PR / Open Letters Gazette Cabinet interview Homepage banner Infographics Residents Panel Members toolkit key messages Annual Report, with Council Tax main billing Local radio and TV, ensuring they are aware we are keen to talk about budget situation Webinars 	<p>Residents Stakeholders Members Staff</p> <p>Residents Members Staff</p> <p>Local radio journalists / Residents</p> <p>Members</p>	<p>One off update, with review every 3 months. Gazette Cabinet meeting – quarterly.</p> <p>Annual report is annual.</p> <p>As needed</p>	<p>Comms, supported by SLT, Leader and Finance.</p> <p>Comms, supported by organisation.</p> <p>Comms</p> <p>SLB, Transformation leads</p>
<p>Regular and timely focused budget updates</p> <p>Raising awareness of budget gap and seps to close it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Press release E-news Social media (where appropriate) Local Government publications Residents Panel 	<p>Residents Members Staff</p>	<p>As arise. Then planned approach to PR once information is available.</p>	<p>Comms, supported by Finance and transformation theme leads.</p>

Communication Goal	Communication Method	Audience	Frequency	Owner
<p>Repetition of key messages</p> <p>Transformation streams as timelines get confirmed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release (non-budget focused) where appropriate. • Leaders Column in Gazette • Community events / face to face. Tagging into events already happening. Providing toolkit to staff or CEO / Leader to join. • Actual Radio/BBC Essex ask if there is an appetite for a regular budget chat • Cllr King updates to Members 	<p>Residents Members Staff</p> <p>Readers of the Gazette and its website</p> <p>Residents</p> <p>Residents</p> <p>Members</p>	<p>As arise</p> <p>TBC (fortnightly)</p> <p>As arise</p> <p>As needed</p>	<p>Comms</p> <p>Leader</p> <p>Organisation, CEO, Leader</p> <p>Comms</p> <p>Leader</p>
<p>Promote sign up to City News</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homepage banner • Other e-newsletters • Process forms • Social media • Mentions in press releases • Residents Panel • Members / T&P Council 	<p>Residents Businesses</p>	<p>Regularly</p>	<p>Comms</p>

Communication Goal	Communication Method	Audience	Frequency	Owner
Promotion of Residents Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homepage banners • City News • Mention in press releases • Members / T&P Councils • Video 	Residents	Regularly	Comms & Research Team
Monthly FFF focus topic (determined by FFF timeline)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COLIN content • Webinars • Guest blog once a month • Listen, Learn, Lead topic lead • Regular short videos from SLB and topic leads • SUN meetings • Frontline service roadshows • Manager engagement toolkit • Publish a quarterly financial update against key milestones • Support Wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with People team to promote benefits of working for the council • Continue to embed and embrace company values • Full visual calendar of planned comms 	Staff Some content can be used for Members too	Regularly	Comms team, SLB, Heads of Service and HR

Communication Goal	Communication Method	Audience	Frequency	Owner
Fit for the Future drop-in session/innovation festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In person at Rowan House, invite to all staff and Members 	Staff Members	Twice a year Further event can be planned at critical points in the timeline as needed	Heads of Service with support from Comms
Essex wide approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBC 	Essex residents	TBC	ECC, supported by CCC comms
Reinforcement of how we are we doing well e.g. city centre doing well, new business in Colchester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Press release Social media Partnership working BID and others 	Residents Members Staff	As arise, will be listed on the forward plan	Comms, supported by organisation
Myth busting, Guerrilla marketing Idea needs forming depending on FFF content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media 	Residents		Comms, supported by organisation

Insight and Evaluation

Evaluation enables us to measure the impact of our work and provides the evidence and insight to show what works and what doesn't, so enabling us to improve and shape the strategy and delivery of future activity under the Fit for the Future programme.

The Future of Colchester survey report and other key research and insight will be used to shape message and approach.

Insight from a recent Internal Comms Survey has been used to shape the communications approach for staff. Continuing to gain insight and adapting our approach is key to ensuring staff engagement.



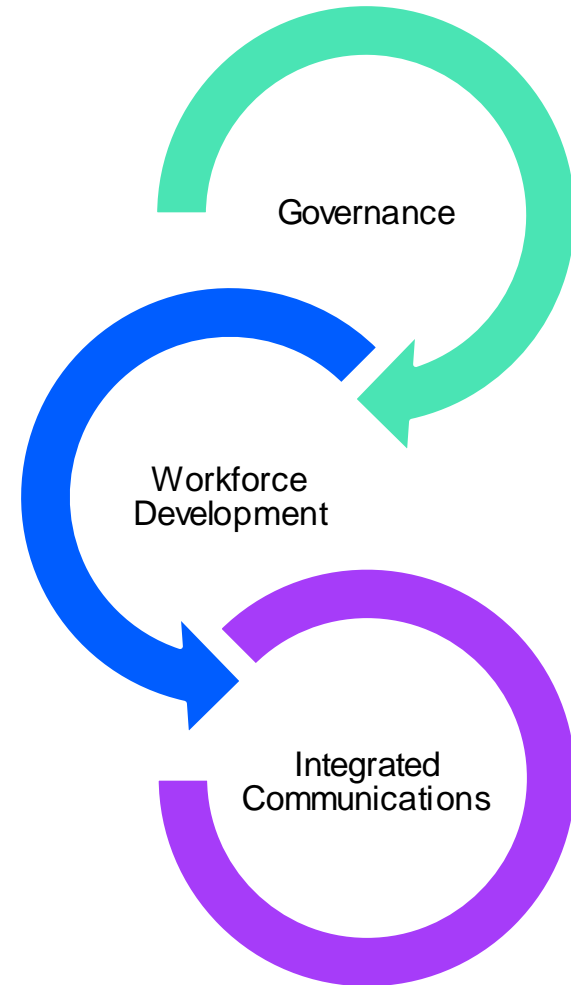
Evaluation and insight tools and techniques

	External	Internal	Members	Stakeholders
Qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media listening • Residents' Panel discussion and feedback • Customer Services feedback • Public meetings 'have your say' • Feedback from staff and partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak Up Now group insight • Live pulse check ins through webinars • Listen, Learn, Lead insight (Leadership and Managers) • SLB to attend team meetings • Anonymous feedback and question form on COLIN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion at internal meetings • Discussion at public meetings • Discussion between members and the Leader and CEO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion at meetings • Feedback to SLB and HoS.
Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media coverage • Social media engagement/reach • Website page views • Subscribers and open rate for City News e-newsletter • Number of Resident Panel members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinar attendance • Event attendance • COLIN page views • Listen, learn, lead take up • Video views 		

Delivery

The Communications Plan will work in harmony with the Workforce Development Strategy and Governance programme.

Internal and External Communication Plans have been created and will continue to be live documents that will continue to grow and be shaped as the Fit for the Future programme progresses.



*** DRAFT ***



Colchester City Council

Future Workforce Plan

Enabling Transformation through our People



***** DRAFT *****

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7 Our workforce priorities and action plan ..	Page 14

1 Introduction

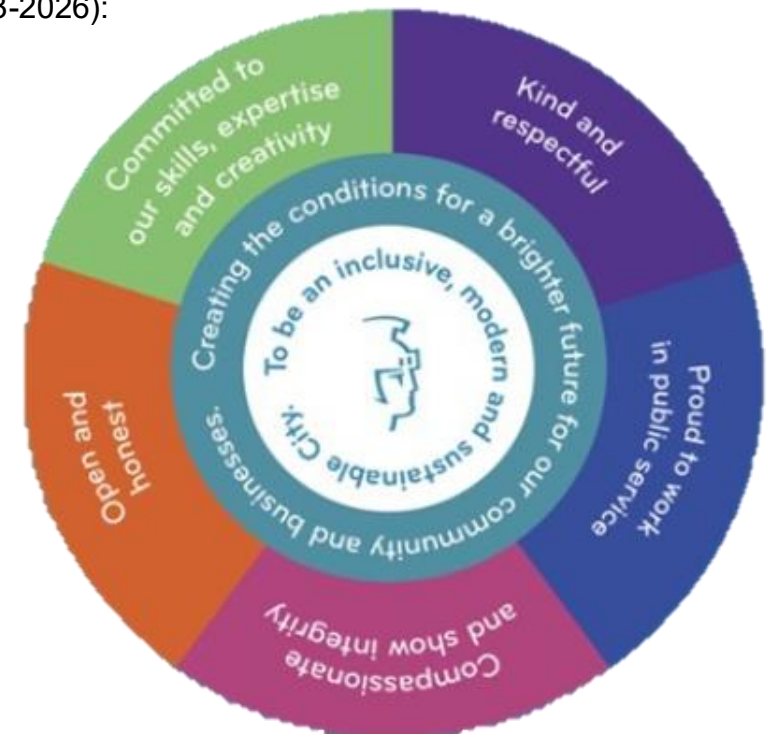
To be a modern council and to ensure we are fit for the future needs of our residents, our aim is to have a workforce that reflects the lived experience of the people it serves. We want to be an employer of choice for Colchester residents, with a high-performing, agile and diverse workforce, capable of delivering innovative services which enable our city to grow and ensure every community and place matters.

The Council's Strategic Plan 'A City Fit for the Future' sets out a clear vision for the outcomes the council wants to deliver for the city of Colchester over the next three years, alongside the actions we will take to get there. The Workforce Strategy describes the way we plan to develop our current and future workforce to ensure they have the right skills, environment and values to enable the council to deliver its Strategic Plan.

Our Strategic Plan sets out the six priorities for the council over the next three years (2023-2026):

- Respond to the climate emergency.
- Deliver modern services for a modern city.
- Improve health, wellbeing and happiness.
- Deliver homes for those in need.
- Grow our economy so everyone benefits.
- Celebrate our city, heritage and culture.

To reflect the six strategic priorities, the council has created a new vision, purpose and core values which define and shape our workplace culture. They reflect who we are and what matters to us as council employees.



2 Drivers for change

As we work to turn the vision and priorities into reality, we must also continue to live within our means.

We have a diverse and committed workforce focused on delivering services to our residents.

However, cuts to our core funding, on-going financial pressures coupled with ambitious plans for our city means that we will need to operate very differently to deliver on our vision and purpose and be a sustainable council that can live within its means.

Our response to this financial challenge must be radical; to close the budget gap and future proof our organisation, we will need to reduce our operating costs by 25% over the next 3 years.

To achieve this, we have developed a transformation programme encompassing a portfolio of work to reimagine what we do as a Council and how we deliver it. The 'Fit for the Future' portfolio will make sure that we are exactly that; fit for the future of our city, of our organisation and of our people.

Our workforce will be critical to the delivery of the Fit for Future transformation portfolio. To enable the level of change we will need an engaged workforce, investment in technology and skills, inclusive leadership and people policies and processes that will enable and sustainable, agile and resilient workforce that is fit for the future. At an organisational level, we will need a great understanding of our workforce in terms of their values, career aspirations and why they choose to work for the council so we can retain their skills.

*** DRAFT ***

Senior Leadership Board				
Environment	Leisure & Economy	Housing	Assets	Corporate
Waste Services	Culture & Heritage	HRA Review	Asset Management	Shared Services
Rosa Tanfield	Frank Hargrave	Lindsay Barker	Mandy Jones	Richard Block
Greening & Street Care	Active and Wellbeing	Housing Provision		Future Workforce
Rosa Tanfield Mel Rundle	Rory Doyle	Philip Sullivan		Jess Douglas
	Economic Growth			Digital Customer
	Matt Sterling			Mel Kemp-Salt

[Fit for the Future transformation programme overview]

3 Where are we now

Our Strategic Plan, alongside our Vision, Purpose and Core Values forms the basis of organisational transformation.

We will establish a clear link between our strategic priorities and our talent needs. A leaner and agile organisation will require a core workforce with the ability to add interim capacity and expertise as and when required.

We will support our people through this change, ensuring we live and breathe our core values. Showing integrity and kindness, being open and honest, demonstrating commitment to our skills, expertise and creativity, and ultimately being proud to work in public service has never been more important.

Our workforce is our most valuable asset. Providing critical services to residents, it needs to be skilled, engaged, motivated and responsive to the changing environment. Our vision as an employer is to invest in our people to build a skilled, agile and sustainable workforce that can fully utilise its potential.

The Covid-19 pandemic and world events have impacted our economy, government response and therefore our city and communities. The ability to lead in a volatile, complex and uncertain environment has become the norm and our leaders will need to acknowledge that reality and develop the skills to respond positively, with clarity and clear direction. Many of our leaders are having to manage a disparate and hybrid workforce and how they manage may require a re-set as the council transforms and staff engagement becomes ever more important.

We have embraced system working alongside Anchor organisations on shared strategic priorities and sharing a senior post with the Integrated Care Board with potentially more shared role opportunities to come. We are also progressing with sharing our back-office services with Braintree and Epping Forest District Councils. There will be a great deal of change for our staff which will require clear communication and engagement on the vision and direction of travel and enabling staff to work across boundaries.

The Future Workforce plan sets out what we will do in the next 1-2 years to achieve our vision to build a sustainable workforce that can deliver on the council's ambitious agenda.

4 Our current workforce profile

Since the economic crisis in 2010, the council has undertaken a series of fundamental service reviews which has transformed the way we work and delivered significant efficiencies and financial savings.

There is a policy framework in place that supports our workforce development and change processes:

- Change Management and Redundancy Policy
- Wellbeing Strategy
- Flexible and Agile Working Policies
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Equality Impact Assessment guidance
- Officer Pay Policy
- Organisational Development Action Plan – add link
- Staff recognition policy

<p>We employ – 879 staff</p> <p>FTE is: 761.5 staff</p> <p>Casual staff – 239 workers</p> <p>Agency workers -£ 1.1 million 2022/23</p>	<p>Gender split</p> <p>Female – 45%</p> <p>Male -54%</p> <p>Re-assigned -1%</p>	<p>Gender pay gap</p> <p>1.9% in favour of</p>	<p>Disability (declared) - 5.12%</p>
<p>Full time staff - 647/74%</p> <p>Part time staff - 232/26%</p>	<p>Across our family:</p> <p>CBH – 241 headcount – 222.5 FTE</p> <p>CCH Ltd and Amphora – 49 HC – 41 FTE</p>	<p>Ethnic minority staff (declared) - 6.74%women</p>	<p>Staff turnover 14.3%</p>
		<p>Total employees CCC + CBH CCH Ltd and Amphora:</p> <p>1169 Headcount</p> <p>1025 - FTE</p>	

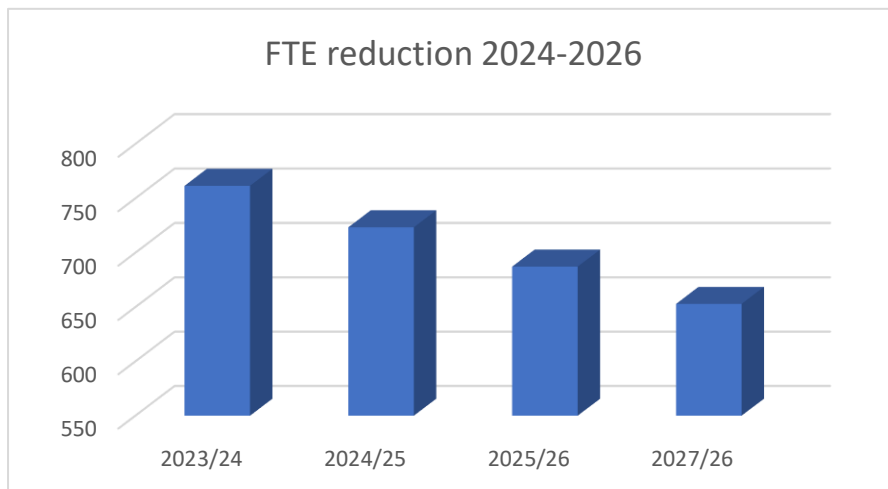
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5 Where do we need to be

This future workforce plan seeks to future proof the organisation, by ensuring the council has the resources, skills and capacity to deliver services in a changing economic and local government landscape. Understanding the current and predicting the future workforce landscape is vital to ensuring the council can attract and retain staff and provide different work experiences that reflect the needs of our diverse workforce. The following external challenges may impact on our workforce ambitions, but through effective workforce planning and understanding and engaging with staff, we aim to minimise the impact of these external factors:

- Demand for skilled staff is outpacing the labour market and the council must constantly review its employment offer to recruit and retain staff.
- Competitive pay and reward are an issue for some staff and therefore the council must look at the wider benefits it can offer, particularly professional development and career choice.
- The expectations of our workforce at different points of their working lives are different and the council needs to understand these differences and be flexible in its employment offer.

To deliver the budget, we will need to reduce our operating costs by 25%. We aim to achieve this through a combination of income generation opportunities, efficiencies generated through shared services, different models of delivery and some natural attrition. With an annual turnover rate of around 15%. With an annual turnover rate of around 15%, we assume an annual reduction of staff (full time equivalents) of 5%.



6 How we will achieve it

To deliver the council's strategic priorities, alongside the Transformation Portfolio and address our financial challenges our future workforce we have developed eight 'Levers for Change'.

<p>Sustainable</p>	<p>Establishment is affordable within the council's budget, but work is achievable, fulfilling, and long hours are not the norm. Core workforce, with ability to bring in additional interim capacity and expertise to drive through council priorities. Staff are fulfilled, quality of work life is positive, and needs are being met. Strengthened culture and internal processes to develop and upskill staff internally rather than externally recruit or use temporary staff to cover posts. Emphasis on wellbeing at work so everyone can thrive at work; Healthy body, healthy mind, healthy workplace.</p>
<p>Agile</p>	<p>The need for an adaptable workforce, with an increase in demand for our services, technological advancements and different models of delivery will need a responsive workforce that is enabled to respond, adapt, learn new skills and gain knowledge. We will utilise our existing skills and share knowledge across the council, systems and partnership. In return the council will invest in its people to learn new skills, embrace new opportunities to do different work and be open to change.</p>
<p>Resilient</p>	<p>Together we will need to be clear on the direction of the council and resilient to meet the challenges. Our people will be supported to adapt and thrive in a constantly changing environment, by focusing on people's wellbeing, physical and mental health. We will build a resilient, high performing workforce by supporting staff holistically by adopting a biopsychosocial approach.</p>
<p>Inclusive</p>	<p>Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to EDI and are involved in activities to promote inclusion. Colleagues are respectful of each other and working proactively to create an inclusive environment free of discrimination and harassment where difference is celebrated. Increased diversity and good representation across the council against each protected characteristic More diversity within senior leadership team. Workforce reflective of our communities EDI embedded in every workforce activity</p>
<p>Ready to develop skills for the future</p>	<p>Investment in skills development linked to council priorities and transformation Opportunities for our workforce to learn, grow and develop new skills Generous to share learning and knowledge, to develop and empower others</p>

Engaged	Working together to achieve the council’s vision and purpose underpinned by our core values; Showing integrity and kindness, being open and honest, demonstrating commitment to our skills, expertise and creativity, and being proud to work in public service. Working diligently together with residents to deliver results.
Embracing system working and shared service opportunities	Building on existing and forging new partnerships, work collaboratively to realise the opportunities that shared services can bring; resilience, improving capacity, building relationships, retaining staff, service efficiencies and improved customer journey.
Digital and data enabled	Investment in skills, to enable technological innovations and to support transformation, building digital services to enable customers and deliver services efficiently. Using data to support evidence-based workforce planning and to measure impact.

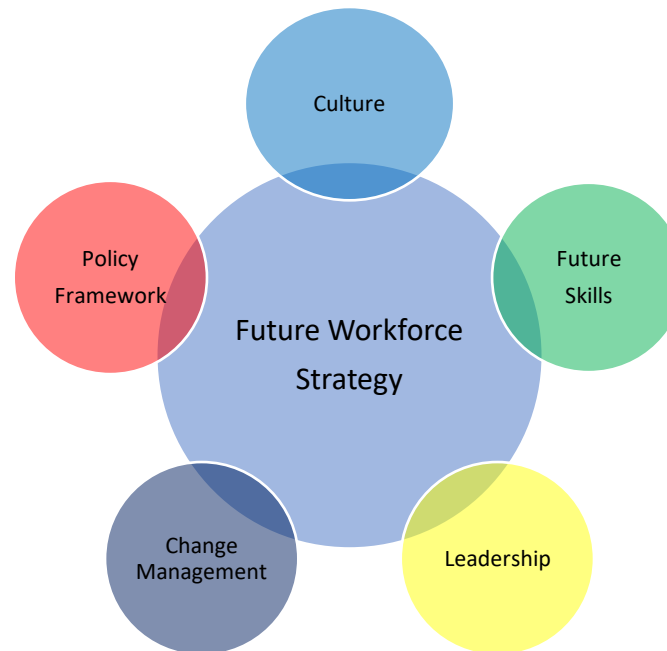
The council is going through unprecedented transformation; inspirational leadership is vital to shaping the direction, supporting staff to perform their best and ensuring everyone is able to achieve great results.

To build the workforce of the future our leaders will need to be people focused:

1. Continually model the council’s core values
2. Be committed to leading a diverse workforce and promoting inclusion
3. Take time to listen without judgement, communicate purpose openly and regularly, offering feedback opportunities
4. Be able to lead transformation positively and collaboratively understanding and managing the impact of change on people
5. Have an open mindset, a desire to listen, understand alternative viewpoints and tolerance of ambiguity and build resilience.
6. Be curious and open to learning and development of new skills
7. Collaborative, empowering individuals and harnessing input from diverse groups
8. Enable staff to do their best work, be engaged, motivated and proud to work for the council
9. Focused and supporting the wellbeing of colleagues
10. Be ambitious for the council and lead by our leadership pledge:
 - Share a common purpose, vision, and endeavour;
 - To commit to the values of public life;
 - Be accountable for our behaviour and the impacts we have on those we lead;
 - Model exemplary behaviour and uphold the highest standards in our leadership roles;
 - Empower and enable colleagues and to collaborate to deliver the best outcomes for our communities;
 - Be open and supportive of change when it is in the best overall interest of the Council family and its residents
 - Lead with integrity, honesty, and kindness

Our workforce strategy has many independencies:

- To be sustainable and deliver excellent services will require agility, skills, new technology and staff engagement.
- Embedding our vision, purpose and core values will require inspirational leaders, communication, modelling and recognising behaviours that reflect our core values.
- Our change management policies and processes need to enable change, be fair and transparent and trusted by staff.
- New technology will enable different ways of working and will need to be supported by investment in new skills.
- To become an inclusive council, we must have a clear EDI strategy in place for our people and communities.
- To be resilient we will need to work with system partners to deliver strategic priorities and adopt a shared service approach where opportunities arise.
- We will respond to the competitive external recruitment challenges, by drawing on public sector recruitment campaigns and collaborating with partners to address capacity and skills challenges.



How will we know achieved our workforce priorities

- The council is sustainable and lives within its means – staffing budget is balanced
- Strategic plan action plan is delivered, KPIs are achieved
- Reduction in the use and cost of agency and interim temporary workers for core roles
- Staff tell us that their wellbeing is prioritised by the council
- Sickness absence due to mental health and physical work factors is reduced – annual sickness absence target is achieved
- Investment in skills provides a return on investment, i.e. improved performance, career progression, staff retention
- The rate of staff re-deployed through the change process is higher than the turnover rate.
- Examples of internal movement and progression increase
- Staff satisfaction and engagement improves over the next 3 years
- Workforce reflects Colchester City's population as per the census.
- Senior Leadership Team is diverse and more inclusive
- Council achieves excellence standard against the LGA equalities framework
- Apprenticeship levy is spent in full, either through new apprenticeship recruitment or professional development of existing staff
- Clear examples of partnership working delivers strategic priorities and builds capacity and resilience.
- Staff increasingly working across systems and collaborating successfully across services and partners.

7 Our workforce priorities and action plan

Sustainable - Key elements	We will	How will we know if we succeed	Target date
<p>Sustainable Leaner council – 25% reduction in operating costs will impact size of workforce Coherent strategic approach to workforce planning, to define, attract and grow our workforce and future leaders Identification of pinch points and priorities over the next few years to address shortages /surpluses informed by knowledge of our skill levels across our workforce. Significant change and new models of delivery Leaders who can communicate and engage staff HR Change Management Policy and process Opportunities for staff to shape the programme, provide feedback and ideas Effective internal communications Acknowledging that the size of our workforce needs to reduce, manage this partially through natural turnover, internal recruitment first, re-skilling to minimise redundancies. Use data to support evidence-based workforce planning and to measure impact.</p>	<p>Review Change Management Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus of the policy to change to re-deployment first not necessarily exit to retain skills and minimise costs • Review job matching threshold of 80% to allow more flexibility to amend roles • Career support: personal skills development plans, re-deployment opportunities discussions using existing coaches trained to be internal career coaches. • Everyone in the redeployment pool assigned a career coach 	<p>Most vacant posts are filled through internal re-deployment.</p> <p>Highly effective career coaches in place and staff retention remains stable.</p>	<p>February 2024</p>
	<p>Change Management skills programme to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding our Transformation and Future Workforce Programme • Developing options for change • Facilitation and coaching skills • Change management Process – how to implement • The importance of involving, communicating and consulting teams through change • Managing redundancy conversations positively • Career and talent management 	<p>Managers effectively managing change process through their teams.</p> <p>Staff tell us through surveys that they understand, feel engaged and supported through the change process.</p> <p>Employee relations issues are managed well.</p>	<p>March/April 2024</p>
	<p>Operational / Service Workforce and Organisational Development Plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create workforce and OD plans bespoke to each service aligned to service plan, long term and short-term workforce needs, embedding core values, change, transformation portfolio, skills development • Train Heads of Service in workforce planning to understand how to plan staff resources and use workforce planning tools to reflect future service needs. Work force plans to include skills development, succession planning, use of apprenticeships, attraction and retention, recruitment, management development 	<p>Workforce/OD Plans in place for each service and teams have the capacity and skills to deliver the strategic and service priorities.</p>	<p>HoS Training Feb 2024</p> <p>Plans – April 2024</p>

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Skills for Future - Key elements	We will	How will we know if we succeed	Target date
<p>Understanding our workforce skills through council wide <u>Skills Audit</u> Identifying the skills needed through the future? Skill gap analysis- based on skills audit, self-assessment and appraisal outcomes Costed Future Skills Plan in place Increased investment in skills development – capacity, focus and budget</p>	<p>Work with partners to establish a skills taskforce to identify the skills needed by the council for the future. Use the outputs of service plans and workforce plans, horizon scanning and research on the future of work.</p>	<p>Skills development programme investment – increase in internal appointments to vacant posts</p>	<p>April 2024</p>
	<p>Conduct a whole council skills audit exercise and gap analysis and develop a learning and development strategy and plan.</p>	<p>L&D plan in place aligned to strategic priorities and future workforce needs.</p>	<p>June/July 2024</p>
	<p>Develop career pathways and development plans for each service to support progression and retention and support our future workforce and leaders.</p>	<p>Staff retention and internal movement increases</p>	<p>Sept 2024</p>
	<p>Transforming our Digital Offer Understand the skills needed to support digital innovation and build efficiencies. Investment in skills, to enable technological and digital innovation to support transformation, building digital services to enable customers and deliver services efficiently. Leaders to be digitally upskilled to inspire others.</p>	<p>All staff are digitally enabled and can effectively use the work systems they need.</p>	<p>TBC</p>
	<p>Promote and build on our apprenticeship programme and aim to take an apprenticeship first approach for internal professional development and recruitment of entry level roles.</p>	<p>Apprenticeship levy is fully spent. Where appropriate apprenticeships offered for professional development.</p>	<p>Relaunch Apprenticeship Week March 2024</p>
	<p>Train workforce on data use to support better evidence-based decision making and performance monitoring.</p>	<p>Use of data increases, decision making enhanced.</p>	<p>Sept 2024</p>

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Leadership - Key elements	We will	How will we know if we succeed	Target date
<p>Leadership framework Coaching/mentoring of future leaders Leadership development programme to support transformation.</p>	<p>Deliver a programme of development for senior leadership team to effectively lead transformation. Team Coaching, performance coaching, Colchester Leadership programme.</p>	<p>Senior Leadership Team effectively leading the organisation and transformation</p>	<p>Started and on-going</p>
	<p>Launch a CCC leaders' skills and competency framework</p>	<p>All managers have a personal development plan linked to framework. Leaders are highly competent.</p>	<p>April 2024</p>
	<p>Deliver a focused leadership programme based on the new leadership skills and competency framework and support leaders to lead in a complex environment; manage hybrid and remote teams and across organisations i.e. shared services.</p>	<p>Leaders competent to lead teams through transformation.</p>	<p>From June 2024</p>
	<p>Re launch Future Leaders talent management programme Offer ILM level 5 & 7 qualifications through the apprenticeship levy Coaching and mentoring support, Secondment opportunities Shadowing, Political awareness and governance course</p>	<p>Pipeline of future leaders in place ready to move into leadership roles.</p>	<p>From Sept 2024</p>
	<p>Launch coaching and mentoring strategy to embed inclusive leadership and coaching culture.</p>	<p>Coaching and inclusive leadership embedded.</p>	<p>Dec 2024</p>
	<p>Create and launch new leaders Induction Programme.</p>	<p>New leaders are ready to fulfil roles.</p>	<p>June 2024</p>
	<p>Integrate core values and leadership pledge in all leadership roles</p>	<p>All leaders model the core values.</p>	<p>March 2024</p>
	<p>Support agile leadership by enabling job shadowing and swaps.</p>	<p>Agile leaders able to fill critical roles.</p>	<p>On-going</p>

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Agile and Resilient - Key elements	We will	How will we know if we succeed	Target date
<p>Effective wellbeing strategy and plans with clear outcomes New occupational health service provider focused on biopsychosocial approach. Empowered staff who understand and share the council's vision, purpose and core values.</p>	Train managers in wellbeing awareness, their responsibilities, where to signpost and how to support staff in crisis.	Mental health sickness absence is reduced.	June 2024
	Wellbeing champions to review and re-focus wellbeing strategy and plans to enhance staff resilience through transformation.	New wellbeing strategy and plans aligned to Fit for Future programme.	Sept 2024
	Work with health partners to identify and provide health interventions to improve wellbeing and attendance.	Sickness absence target achieved.	Jan 2025
	Develop a network of mentors and implement a formal buddying system to support new staff through their probation period.	New staff can deliver their roles quickly. Staff retained after probation period.	Sept 2024
	Introduce more flexible Job Accountability Statements and roles and start to embed the principle in our recruitment that we work in a fluid and agile environment and roles may change as the organisation transforms.	Staff movement encouraged across CCC. Staff understand the need for flexibility.	Sept 2024
	Launch a new occupational health provider with an innovative biopsychosocial approach. Focus will shift from addressing the physical and mental health issue by taking a more holistic approach, with specialist support offered.	New OH provider supports staff to return to work after absence.	May 2024

Inclusive - Key elements	We will	How will we know if we succeed	Target date
<p>EDI objectives embedded into workforce planning and Targets and plans to address under representation EDI group and champions collaborating and steering EDI plan and activity Work towards Excellence against the LGA Equalities framework Enabling an open and happy workforce</p>	<p>Roll out an EDI learning and development plan. EDI workshop for SLT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating bespoke accessible content and EDI learning opportunities for front line and operational staff • Annual Programme of EDI lunch and learn sessions -open to all • Development and roll out of EDI workshops for staff to supplement e-learning • Refreshed EDI induction model • 	Managers and staff to understand their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.	From Feb 2024
	Introduce a Reverse Mentoring programme	Staff empowered.	January 2025

		Diversity promoted and stereotypes broken down. Staff develop business skills	
	Development of an EDI Strategy that demonstrates our inclusion ambition and commitment to diversity and inclusion aligned to the LGA Equalities framework.	Achieve the excellence standard within 3 years.	June 2025
	Raise awareness of different EDI issues through a calendar of events and activities	CCC is an inclusive organisation.	On-going
	Conduct accessibility audits in corporate buildings to support our aim to be an inclusive workplace.	Buildings are accessible to all.	In line with Asset Strategy plan
	Measure and monitor the impact of our EDI work through objectives and KPIs	KPIs in place and delivered.	Sept 2024
	Providing tailored and targeted EDI initiatives based on the needs of each service.	EDI employee relations issues reduce.	On-going
	Introduce a young person network to support younger staff in the workforce and provide a social hub, to help them to connect in the hybrid environment.	Younger workforce thrive and stay.	May 2024

Engaged - Key elements	We will	How will we know if we succeed	Target date
New Fit for Future communication and engagement plan Measurement and monitoring engagement through staff surveys. Use of diverse forums to gather workforce insight and feedback. Autonomous staff enabled to innovate and implement new ideas	Communicate, Engage, Consult Refresh our internal and staff engagement plan, aligned to the transformation programme. Be open and honest with staff, using existing communications tools and forums to increase trust and confidence in the change process.	Staff feel informed, understand the rationale for change and have opportunities to shape the future.	In line with FFF internal comms plan
	Review and enhancement of COLIN (intranet) to develop a more interactive and inclusive communications portal.		
	Deliver an annual all-staff conference to support staff engagement and inclusion.		
	Enable front line staff, to receive communications through investment in ICT equipment and training in remote locations to improve engagement and sense of belonging.	Front line staff are fully informed and engaged.	March 2025

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	Launch a digital ideas portal so staff to support innovation and implementation of new ideas to improve services.	New innovations and service improvements encouraged.	Sept 2024
	Celebrating success - Review staff recognition scheme to make it more agile and inclusive, e.g. employee of week, team of the month etc.	Staff are recognised for their contribution towards the transformation programme.	Sept 2024
	Measure and monitor staff engagement through staff survey, pulse surveys and develop follow up action plans to address issues and enhance engagement.	Staff survey analysed and action in place to address issues.	All staff survey June 2024

System working/shared services Key Elements	We will	How will we know if we succeed	Target date
Shared services across council family and North Essex LAs Shared roles with system partners Collaboration with alliance, anchor partners, public sector, to provide capacity, resilience and shared learning and delivery.	Work with Epping Forest and Braintree District Council to deliver the vision for back office shared services across the 3 local authorities.	Shared back office shared service in place and drivers delivered.	September 2025
	Develop a framework to support the delivery of future shared services: Share our knowledge with other partners and North Essex Councils.	Business case delivers shared service - staff are engaged and work in shared service positively.	Sept 2024
	Ensure staff earmarked to be in the shared service are given opportunities to engage and shape the shared service to ensure buy in.		On-going

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To deliver this plan we will need:

Extra capacity to deliver/co-ordinate the workforce strategy

Skills development plan plus budget to deliver

Leadership development programme focused on transformation

Buy-in and engagement of members, SLT, all staff, partners

Fit for the Future Governance (Proposed)

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Transformation Governance – Structure and Groups

The scale of the financial challenge we face is such that our response must be radical. To achieve the change needed to close the budget gap over the next three years and future proof our organisation, a fundamental portfolio of transformation activity is needed to reimagine what we do as a council and ensure we are 'Fit for the Future'.

Effective governance of the portfolio is key to ensuring appropriate oversight and decision making from senior officers and councillors.

The proposed governance structure is intended to ensure good governance, with decisions at the lowest level possible and with oversight from Members and Officers at the highest level. In addition to local governance, some programmes will report to other groups, e.g. North Essex Councils.

Informal Member Governance

The bodies that will support decision makers, but that have no decision-making powers of their own, include:

Leadership

The Leadership group consists of Cabinet members and the Senior Leadership Board. The role of Leadership is to hold the Transformation Portfolio Board accountable for delivery.

Oversight Group

Purpose: To build cross-party discourse, understanding and consensus on the portfolio of transformation programmes.

Members: Group Leaders, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Transformation and Performance, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Waste, Chair of Governance & Audit Committee, Senior Leadership Board

Scrutiny Panel

Purpose: Portfolio and programme level scrutiny of decisions

Governance & Audit Committee

Purpose: High level oversight of the portfolio governance and risk issues

Informal Officer Governance

Transformation Portfolio Board

Recognising that there is change and transformation work happening across the council, the Transformation Portfolio Board will be responsible for providing central oversight of the delivery of programmes and projects within Fit for the Future against milestones and plans, managing risks and issues, and progress against key performance indicators and savings and revenue targets.

The Board gives top level officer consideration of transformation and will provide upward reporting to Members to allow active management and advice of the portfolio to take place.

1. Frequency

Monthly

2. Purpose

To review progress on the transformation portfolio at Colchester City Council, as informed and advised by Senior Responsible Officers (SROs), and to ensure that issues and risks are addressed. Group responsibilities are to:

- Hold individual projects to account, providing support and guidance to SROs as needed.
- Add or remove initiatives from the transformation portfolio over time as required, to ensure that the Council's transformation objectives are met.
- Manage the overarching resourcing, cost and risk positions of the transformation programmes within the context of the Fit for the Future portfolio
- Provide upward reporting and information to Member Committees and Groups.

3. Membership

The Transformation Portfolio Board will comprise:

- Chair: Mel Kemp-Salt, Director of ICT & Transformation
- Vice Chair: Andrew Small, Director of Finance, Jess Douglas, Head of People
- Senior Leadership Board
- Andrew Weavers, Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer
- SROs for each Programme (as required)

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- Coordinating the delivery of a blueprint for the future of the organisation
- Approving overall strategic direction of the portfolio and programmes within it
- Confirming and communicating information about the portfolio to staff, members, and stakeholder groups
- Appointing a Programme's Senior Responsible Officer
- Ensure resources are available to deliver a transformation programme
- Ensure Portfolio benefits are delivered

5. Administration

The Project Management Office (PMO) will provide agenda and papers in advance of the meeting.

Transformation Programme Groups

Programmes within the Portfolio will be led by a Senior Responsible Officer of the council who is accountable for successful delivery of transformation activity and achieving outcomes and benefits.

1. Purpose

To identify and define potential transformation projects for further consideration and development.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- Accountability for delivery of programme outcomes and associated benefits
- Maintains alignment of the programme with the Fit for the Future portfolio
- Manages the relationship with stakeholders, ensuring ongoing support for the programme
- Owns the programme vision and provides strategic direction
- Appoints and authorises project managers to manage projects within the programme
- Reviews progress of projects within the programme and where possible resolves risks and issues

Transformation Project Groups

Programmes are comprised of project groups that are set up following the identification of transformation opportunities and are tasked with developing proposals further. To be comprised of nominated project manager and leads for the project, along with HR and Finance Business Partners and support from the Project Management Office where appropriate.

1. Purpose

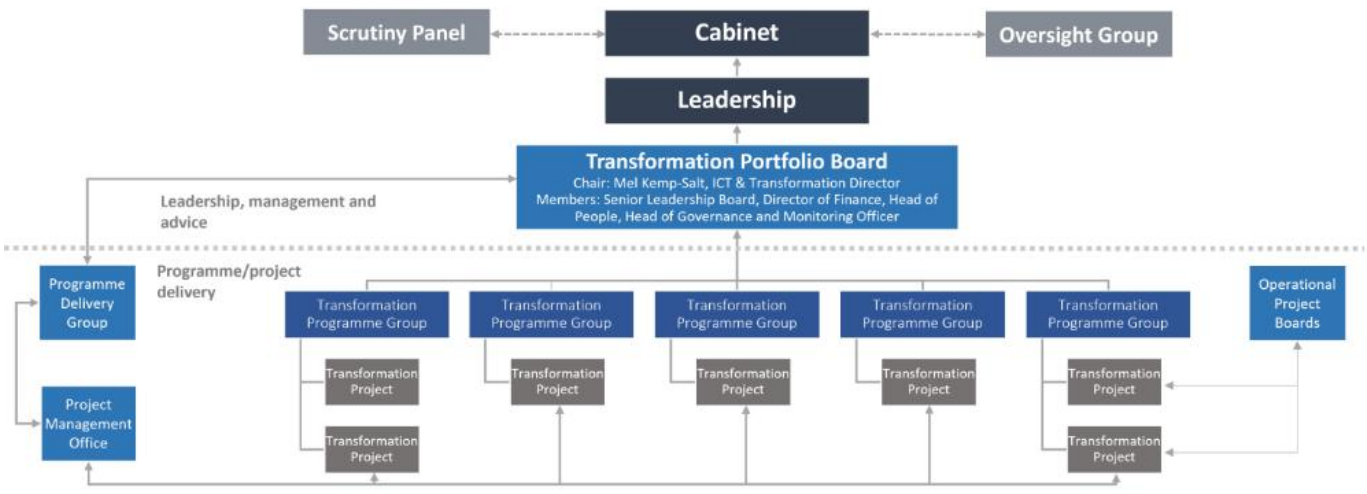
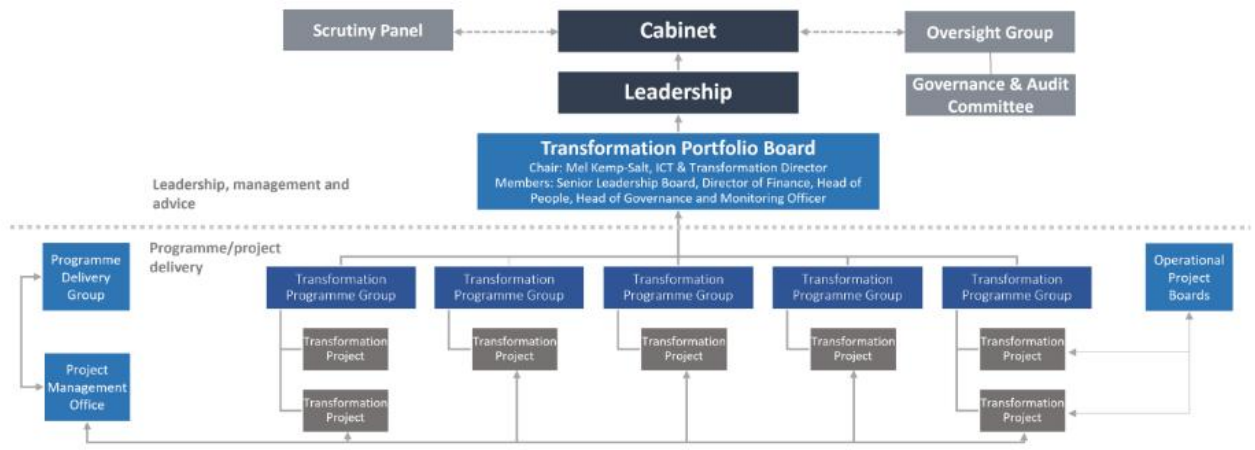
To assess the viability of transformation projects with a view to establishing business cases and Project Initiation Documents for consideration by Programme Delivery Board.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- Assist the project manager to deliver project objectives
- Carry out relevant elements of the project that they are tasked with (within their technical expertise)
- Advise the project manager of any risks that are likely to affect delivery of the project and be a part of the risk management process
- Provide information for project documentation
- Submission of project progress reports
- Produce project products as defined in project business case/Project Initiation Documents (PID)

See the Figure 1 for the structure of the proposed governance framework.

Figure 1



13 February 2024

Report of	Strategic Director	Author	Mandy Jones / Patricia Barry
Title	Fit for the Future – The Estate Plan		
Wards affected	All		
			☎ 282501

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Public sector estates across the UK have suffered from decades of under investment. Although many of Colchester City Council owned buildings, land and public spaces are valuable for the contribution they make to communities, place-making and our economy, in financial terms they have generally become more of a liability than an asset and a drain on diminishing resources. Colchester City Council (the Council) have taken the brave decision to tackle this issue head on to fully understand the liabilities, risks and opportunities that lie within its estate.

1.2. In keeping with the organisation’s strategic aspiration of ‘Fit for the Future’, this Estate Plan, will review all assets, except for properties within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) (which has its own 30 year Business plan) and is intended to be adopted for the long term. It has been written to be politically neutral, using best practice principles of asset management to ensure that the estate operates as an advantage to the Council in the longer term delivering a financially sustainable strategy with cross party support.

2. Action Required

2.1. To consider the document ‘Fit for the Future: The Estate Plan’ (Appendix A) and make any recommendations for consideration by Cabinet.

3. Reason for Scrutiny

3.1. To allow Panel members the opportunity to review the proposed Estates Plan and agree the approach.

4. Background Information

4.1. In 2023 CIPFA were commissioned to draft a Property Asset Management Framework identifying best practice principles. The key recommendation to deliver change and improvement was the introduction of a Corporate Landlord Model. This was taken forward and approval was given by Cabinet in November 2023.

- 4.2. Under a Corporate Landlord approach the ownership of the asset and the responsibility of its management, maintenance and funding are centralised. This model is being taken forward as part of the Council's Fit for the Future (Transformation) programme, which is also being considered as a whole programme, at this Scrutiny Panel meeting.
- 4.3. Whilst some Corporate Landlord models are concerned with land and buildings only, Colchester City Council has reviewed its estate through the lens of risk and liability, this Estate Plan therefore includes consideration of other miscellaneous structures (in excess of 4500) that it has responsibility for across Colchester to have full knowledge of the whole estate, its risks, liabilities and any opportunities.
- 4.4. In addition to the introduction of a Corporate Landlord, the CIPFA report suggested a three-tier document approach of:
- A high-level Property Asset Management **Policy**
 - A Property Asset Management **Strategy**
 - A working Property Asset Management **Action Plan**
- 4.5 The document at Appendix A focuses on the first two tiers as there are significant discovery works underway (at the time of writing this report) in relation to stock condition, risk and commercial performance which will be completed by mid-April 2024. A draft of the Action Plan (tier 3) will then be developed and completed by end of mid-May 2024 following receipt and analysis of information and data.
- 4.6 The Estate Plan is predicated upon the Corporate Landlord managing and controlling all assets directly, with the exception of those properties within the HRA (the Council's own housing stock). It is structured around the operational, non-operational and investment estate and sets out an approach to guide how assets will be utilised efficiently and effectively to achieve the identified objectives and outputs. Decisions made about property will ensure the Council's corporate ambitions and outcomes are fully considered and a 'one council' approach is adopted through the Corporate Landlord function.

5. **Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

The proposals set out in this report are designed to help the Council achieve its objectives and obligations. Issues of equality and diversity in relation to land and buildings will be considered centrally as part of these obligations.

6. **Standard References**

There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety, environmental and sustainability or risk management implications.

7. **Strategic Plan References**

The proposals set out in this report speak to the Policy and Strategy elements of the CIPFA recommended framework for Asset Management. The Action Plan that will be developed following the completion of the discovery phase will include detail in relation to the Council's Strategic Plan priorities Strategic Plan 2020-23.

8. Consultation

The implementation of the proposals will entail appropriate staff consultation.

9. Publicity Considerations

The rationale for the corporate landlord team model will help with any public explanation of these proposals and should enhance public confidence in the ability of the Council to manage its current and future assets. Communications will be considered at each stage of the process of implementation and aligned with those of the Council's Fit for the Future (Transformation) programme.

10. Financial implications

The approach to finance will be proactive and transparent in relation to short, medium and long-term planning and management which will include whole-life cost considerations in decision making in relation to capital investment, into existing and new assets. Detailed financial planning will be undertaken following the discovery phase that is currently underway.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

The proposals outlined will help manage assets more effectively and efficiently against all priorities, including those with health, wellbeing and safety implications. These will be considered in any decisions made around the future use and management of Council assets.

12. Health and Safety Implications

These proposals will allow for a more co-ordinated approach to the maintenance of Council assets and enhanced mitigation of any future associated risks.

13. Risk Management Implications

The approach to risk will be proactive and transparent in relation to short, medium and long-term management and risk mitigation activity.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

Co-ordination of Assets functions should allow greater oversight of how assets as a whole (and separately) contribute to the Council's Climate Change and carbon reduction priorities. This will enable the development of the Council's carbon management plan to be considered alongside other Council priorities, with a more joined up approach and greater emphasis given to environmental and carbon reduction objectives in future Asset Management Strategy, Policy and plans.

Appendices

Appendix A: Fit for the Future: The Estate Plan

FIT FOR THE FUTURE: THE ESTATE PLAN

February 2024

CONTENTS

- 1 Context**
- 2 Background**
- 3 Estate Policy**
- 4 Estate Strategy**
 - 4.1 The Portfolio
 - 4.2 Asset Review and Rationalisation
 - 4.3 Performance Reporting

1 CONTEXT

Public sector estates across the UK have suffered from decades of under investment and have generally become more of a liability than an asset and a drain on diminishing resources. Colchester City Council (the Council) have taken the brave decision to tackle this issue head on to fully understand the liabilities, risks and opportunities that lie within its estate. In keeping with the organisation's strategic aspiration of 'Fit for the Future', this Estate Plan, will review all assets except for those properties within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and is intended to be adopted for the long term. It has been written to be politically agnostic and use best practice principles of asset management to ensure that the estate operates as an advantage to the Council in the longer term delivering a financially sustainable strategy with cross party support.

The Council is no exception to the fact that its estate has grown incrementally rather than in a planned and strategic way. Built assets are usually in place for over 60 years and designed for a single purpose in mind without much flexibility for alternative use or redevelopment. For the Council, this is a significant issue as circa 30% of its 300 properties are either listed or in conservation areas which, on one hand are part of the identity of Colchester, but on the other adds additional strain on finances and potential opportunity. In addition, the Council has responsibility for over 4500 other structures such as weirs, church walls, quaysides, pontoons, riverbeds, monuments etc that have been inherited or become our responsibility due to law (closed churchyards) or been given to, or adopted by the City over time, but all come with the responsibility for managing or maintaining them.

2 BACKGROUND

In 2023 CIPFA were commissioned to draft a Property Asset Management Framework identifying best practice principles. The key recommendation to deliver change and

improvement was the introduction of a Corporate Landlord Model. This was taken forward and approval was given by Cabinet in November 2023.

Under a Corporate Landlord approach the ownership of the asset and the responsibility of its management, maintenance and funding are centralised. The service departments then make a case for the property they wish to change or use, enabling the Corporate Landlord to properly plan and manage space the Council needs, in the right locations. The service department's priority is therefore to plan and deliver the service, and the Corporate Landlord's function is to ensure the service is suitably accommodated and to maintain and manage the asset. Whilst some Corporate Landlord models are concerned with land and buildings only, Colchester City Council has reviewed its estate through the lens of risk and liability, this Estate Plan therefore includes other miscellaneous structures that it has responsibility for across Colchester (as outlined above).

In addition, the CIPFA report suggested a three-tier document approach of:

- A high-level Property Asset Management **Policy**
- A Property Asset Management **Strategy**
- A working Property Asset Management **Action Plan**

This document focuses on the first two tiers as there are significant discovery works underway (at the time of writing this report) in relation to stock condition, risk, commercial performance which will be completed by mid-April 2024. The Action Plan (tier 3) will then be developed and completed by mid-May 2024 following receipt and analysis of information and data.

3 ESTATE POLICY

As outlined above, the Council has agreed to a different approach to managing and investing in its estate. We are adopting several fundamental policies that should remain in place over the next 20 years, even through changes in leadership as they relate to best practice principles for estate management and are intended to support the long-term financial sustainability of the Council. However, it is anticipated that these principles are reviewed and either ratified or refreshed by Cabinet every 10 years.

Longer term policy principles 2024 – 2044:

- All financial planning will be based on a whole life cost approach to investing both capital and revenue in the estate
- Where financial planning identifies issues of affordability on the general fund, disposal or additional income generation/commercial investment opportunities will be considered to ensure fiscal balance
- Any additionality to the property estate will have a robust business case in place which requires financial approval in relation to long term affordability
- The commercial property estate will have its own investment strategy and each new commercial opportunity will have a robust business case in place before decisions are taken

- Decision making will be data driven and encompass risk and benefit analysis
- External funding will be used purposefully and deliberately to underpin the goals and aspirations of the City and its residents
- Where assets are underperforming, investment does not provide value for money or are classified as surplus (ie no strategic hold value, not suitable for housing or required for service delivery) they will be disposed of

4 ESTATE STRATEGY

The Estate Plan is predicated upon the Corporate Landlord managing and controlling all assets directly except for those properties within the HRA. It is structured around the operational, non-operational and investment estate and sets out an approach to guide how assets will be utilised efficiently and effectively to achieve the identified objectives and outputs of the Council and its aspirations for the City of Colchester. Decisions made about property will ensure the Council's corporate ambitions and outcomes are fully considered and a 'one council' approach is adopted through the Corporate Landlord function.

The Estate Plan will be aligned to the Council's Capital Strategy to use capital resources, including capital receipts from property sales, for reduction of borrowing costs, reinvestment into existing stock (both corporate and investment), commercial investment and enable the delivery of the rationalisation of the estate where possible so that the reduced number of buildings can accommodate staff and support front line service delivery to the residents of Colchester.

Decarbonisation and sustainability considerations will be a thread throughout the estate planning and continue through careful selection of materials and components via capital and revenue spend. The action plan will also consider the Carbon Management Plan to ensure continuity of approach.

It will be part of the annual business planning cycle, contributing to the development of savings and spending plans as part of the annual Budget, with the objective that the City Council's property is legislatively compliant, fit for purpose and in appropriate condition to deliver good service outcomes or generate income.

The Strategy will be reviewed and either ratified or refreshed by the Estate Board every 5 years (the Estate Board will be established as part of a new governance structure for the day to day and strategic management of the Estate). However, if there are significant changes resulting from risk assessments or the action plan, then this may need to be addressed at that time.

4.1 THE PORTFOLIO

The Council owns a broad range of assets, with a total value of c£211m (identified in 2023 as the property and land value within the CIPFA report). In addition, there are over 4500 number of structures with little or no value (but need to be appraised). All of these assets have been segmented into three categories:

Operational Portfolio	Non-operational Portfolio	Commercial Portfolio
Single use for service delivery, for example depots, Sport and leisure.	Community centres/voluntary sector buildings Miscellaneous structures eg walls, pontoons, quayside, weirs	This group of assets is specifically intended to produce a revenue income stream. These properties are held directly by the Council. Used for service delivery and income generation e.g. the Town Hall, Rowan House, museums, car parks and leisure facilities

a) The Operational Portfolio

Objective: Operational assets are vital for delivery of Council services. Building on the successes and improved efficiency of the estate over the last decade, the Corporate Landlord team will work closely with Council service areas to drive out further opportunities where Council and other public service providers can co-locate enabling rationalisation of the operational stock. Assets will be operated efficiently to provide quality service outcomes and address local needs whilst reducing running costs and the Council’s carbon footprint.

The Council’s operational portfolio needs to meet several criteria to represent an effective use of the organisation’s and taxpayer’s resources:

- Be an enabler of service delivery to residents and visitors
- Offer a good standard of operational, office and community buildings and as a priority complying with all relevant Health & Safety and regulatory requirements
- Be of a suitable standard of repair with regular investment to reduce any maintenance backlog
- Be affordable to operate
- Have a low environmental impact and follow good practice in sustainability
- Be an effective use of resource (capital and revenue)
- Must be accessible to be public, both in terms of physical design and location

Approach: Key Principles:

- Co-location where possible of services and other public sector partners (for example, Health partners) will be strongly encouraged where possible and where timeframes, decision pathways and funding are aligned
- Assets of historical significance will be assessed to determine how they can be protected and enhanced whilst taking account of the Council’s priorities and resource availability
- Area Planning to be established to ensure social infrastructure and service delivery is enabled by strategic planning of the estate, for example, working with Health partners around primary care, sport and leisure regarding wellbeing, regeneration regarding economic development (and more).
- Service led requirements: it is recognised that each of the individual services have their own property requirements. Working with the service, the Corporate Landlord Business Partner (CLBP) will produce a 3-year plan detailing the asset

need, investment requirement (revenue and capital) and outlining any future changes to the model of service that may have an impact on the asset plan

b) The Non-Operational Portfolio

The current portfolio contains the community assets which are leased to various community and voluntary organisations and the vast number of miscellaneous structures such as monuments, pontoons, weirs, walls, quaysides etc. Currently, this non-operational portfolio is a direct cost with no return to the Council.

Community Assets

Objective: to continue to engage and support communities. The expected growth in the City will also lead to additional social infrastructure requirements.

Approach:

- Establish a council policy for the ownership, use, access and management of the community estate supporting an Asset Based Community Development approach (as outlined in the 'Communities Can' strategy)
- Ensure standard approach in working with community and voluntary groups to demonstrate parity, transparency and equal footing for all those offering to deliver a service to the residents of Colchester
- Introduce a mechanism for ensuring and measuring social value outcomes from the community organisations to be transparent and identify the value of service delivered against the public subsidy rental agreements, for example, peppercorn or below market value rents or if Community Asset Transfer becomes part of this policy,

Miscellaneous Structures

Objective: to ensure these structures are Health and Safety compliant and where they are associated with public use, they are accessible where possible.

Approach:

- To determine the scale of the liability and challenge ownership/responsibility if possible, with a view to transfer, devolve or dispose where possible
- Prepare a prioritised plan for Health and Safety works
- Manage and invest by exception and prioritisation
- Review opportunities for external funding to support maintenance costs
- Strengthen relationships with relevant external stakeholders to review approach to managing these assets in a more strategic, cohesive and financially sustainable way.

c) The Commercial Portfolio

The Commercial Portfolio consists of assets that have been developed/purchased with a view to pure investment return, and some operational assets that provide revenue income to the general fund.

The current portfolio reflects the City Council's historic accumulation of assets. The Council has a range of opportunities to enter into progressive partnerships with developers, investors and occupiers on some of the existing buildings and new opportunities, for example Colchester Northern Gateway within the investment portfolio.

Objective: The objective is to continue to maintain and develop a commercially driven, financially focused 'Commercial Property Portfolio' which can respond promptly to property market cycles to deliver the highest returns - whilst still fulfilling the obligations of a Local Authority:

- Deliver medium term growth in gross income - recognising there will be a reduction during any period of strategic rationalisation if this occurs
- Deliver a total return annually in line with property market conditions
- A Commercial Property Strategy will be produced to clearly identify capital investment required for existing premises and a framework for consideration of new opportunities

Approach: Through an Estate governance and a decision-making framework (to be developed as part of the Corporate Landlord approach) an efficient process to achieve a sustainable and profitable Commercial Portfolio in a risk-controlled manner will be realised:

- At an asset level the portfolio will need to be pro-actively managed to maintain the income, identify opportunities for rental growth and ultimately maximise value
- Annual inspections by suitably qualified surveyors will ensure compliance with all aspects of lease obligations (including repair, maintenance and health and safety)
- Property asset plans will highlight repair and maintenance issues, including the requirement for 'non-discretionary' (e.g. health & safety, statutory and energy rating works) and 'discretionary' (e.g. refurbishment, energy efficiency??) capital expenditure, including rational for refurbishment which will increase income
- Business case approvals for new investment opportunities to comply with the the Council's project management gateway process (as part of the review of the Capital programme)
- Assets of historical significance will be assessed to determine how they can be protected and enhanced whilst taking account of the Council's priorities and resource availability
- Structuring partnerships for development or investment which require specialism from a Joint Venture (JV) partner who is capable and motivated to bring forward appropriate development in a structured manner
- Where operational buildings also offer income generation activity, those assets will also be protected in relation to investment to secure commercial advantage

To deliver these ambitions and maximise returns, the City Council has the ability to utilise the following tools:

- Disposal including freehold sales of properties which do not meet the specified criteria for retention. Freehold release should be balanced with the Council's need to retain property on long leasehold for investment and borrowing purposes.
- Joint Ventures – leveraging expertise and capital
- Development opportunities, including change of use
- Conversion of assets to achieve the best income or capital asset growth.

Business cases should be brought forward to the Estate Board (within the new governance structure) on a case-by-case basis where there are opportunities to enhance the portfolio and the income generated by it.

4.2 ASSET REVIEW AND RATIONALISATION

An annual rolling programme of asset reviews will be introduced for all sites across the 3 portfolios (with the exception of the long-term leases within the Commercial portfolio due to limitations imposed by lease agreements). This is to ensure efficiency of use, identify development potential/housing opportunities or disposal where appropriate of assets that do not add value to the portfolio and maintain momentum in the active management of the estate.

The principle underlying this process should be that the Council retains an asset only if:

- there is an identified service requirement
- it is identified as having/could have development potential within the local plan, or within a realistic timescale (deliverability)
- It can be relet/intensified for revenue generation
- the Council wishes to develop the site itself
- it has strategic value e.g. where a piece of land has value due to access to another area for development known as a ransom strip
- sites that will unlock a development in future (within a specific timescale)
- provides income generation opportunities (which must be identified through the Gateway and Business Case approach)

The proposal is that the Council should not continue to hold assets that do not meet one of those criteria. Assets that are high cost/low performance or yield should be prioritised through this process to ensure that best value is delivered at all times to residents.

4.3 PERFORMANCE REPORTING

The Council needs robust reporting to ensure that Senior Officers and Members have visibility to enable good decision making and to resolve issues, manage risk, support staff, control costs and maximise opportunities as they arise.

The Council will set up a robust governance framework as part of the Corporate Landlord approach, which will include enhanced Member involvement and improved oversight in estate related matters. This will ensure a consistency of approach in the management of property and investment opportunities and will coordinate decisions being presented to Cabinet or made through use of the scheme of delegations.

Further to this, the Council needs to develop performance monitoring of the overall estate, to monitor consolidation, rationalisation, and income generation. For the operational asset portfolio this could include a series of tests and benchmarks (although it is recognised that not all assets will suit this method). These include:

- Gross and net property running cost (£ per square foot)
- Maintenance backlog - disinvest in all premises with a backlog greater than £20 per square foot
- Energy rating – disinvest of all premises with a rating of “E” and below (unless robust commercial business case for investment)
- Utilisation of premises
- Most effective use of capital – identification of operations (undertaken by the Council and other organisations and groups) that occupy valuable assets and determine if the service can be re-provided elsewhere and the value realised
- Future finances – whole life cost approach to support financial sustainability of the Council
- Net present value
- Open market value

For the commercial estate, this could include a combination of market derived benchmarks, where available, and absolute returns where appropriate. These could include:

- Gross income return
- Net income return
- Capital expenditure
- Capital return
- Total return
- Income profile
- Void %
- Sector weightings
- Outstanding rent reviews
- Outstanding lease/tenancy renewals
- Rent and service charge collection statistics
- Potential and actual bad debts
- Tenant risk (exposure to a single tenant or type of occupier)

13 February 2024

Report of	Strategic Director	Author	Mandy Jones / Alistair Wilson
Title	Community use of Colchester City Council Assets and Colchester Events Policy		
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This briefing note sets out additional information relating to the Council’s approach to the policy, use and charging towards the use of Council assets by Community Groups.

2. Action Required

2.1 To note the information set out in the briefing note.

3. Reason for Scrutiny

3.1 At the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel on the 9th August 2023 it was resolved that Scrutiny Panel adds an item to its work programme to clarify the Council’s approach and policy towards the use of community assets which it owns, and guidance as to which could be leveraged for income via charges for use, and which should be kept free for use by the public. Specific reference was made to the use of the Castle Park and other larger assets which are programmed by Colchester Events, a part of Colchester Amphora who run events on behalf of the Council.

4. Background Information

4.1 An Estate Plan has been developed following the recommendations of the October 2023 CIPFA report ‘Property Asset Management Framework – including Policy, Strategy and Action Plan’. The plan outlines an alternative approach to asset management to improve the financial sustainability of the Estate, reduce risk and liability and ease the pressure on the General Fund. The approach is to ensure dynamic management of the estate ensuring performance and efficiency of buildings are maximised, decision making is supported by robust quality data, risk and liabilities are understood and proactively managed and governance is clear and transparent. It will support the Councils strategic plan and link to existing policies.

4.2 The Council has an extensive asset base, made up of a multitude of buildings and building uses range from operational, for example depots, office accommodation, community centres, leisure centres, heritage assets, sports facilities and more. Some of these have multiple uses such as the Town Hall which is used for civic, operational, and income generation space. Whilst there are some policies in place regarding the management of assets, these current suite of policies does not cover all aspects of the estate as there is not a ‘one

size fits all' approach. As part of the Estate Plan, classification of assets will be undertaken, and any outstanding policies will be drafted for approval by the Policy Panel.

4.3 Many assets are used by Community Groups. The approach to the use of each asset needs to take account of several criteria: cost of the asset (future and current inc. maintenance etc), differing service provision and use criteria. (all according to the strategic plan). There are several different plans and policies to support the operation of services, whether service based or corporate, the Events Policy is one of these. This briefing summarises relevant parts of the policy, but further detail can be viewed online by following this link: [Events Policy – Leisure Services Outdoor Events \(windows.net\)](#)

4.4 Colchester Events are permitted via a contract with The Council to use the following venues for Commercial and Community events:

- Town Hall including Moot Hall, Grand Jury Room, Council Chamber and Committee Rooms
- Old Library
- Castle
- Castle Park including Upper and lower park, Castle Bailey, Bandstand
- Charter Hall
- Old Heath Recreation Ground
- Colchester Sports Park

This agreement which entails Amphora paying The Council £100k for the rights to use the venues also recognises the need for shared use by The Council for services and civic events as well as ensuring these assets are available for Community Groups and Commercial uses.

Colchester Events work with a number of Community Groups to programme events such as:

- Hospital radio
- Pipes in the park
- Free family fun festival
- Classic vehicle show

4.5 In relation to assets used for events and programmed by Colchester Events, the Council has an Events Policy which states:

“While registered charities and non-profit making community groups may be offered a “charitable hire rate”, costs will still be passed to the event organiser to ensure no additional burden on the Council (or CATL), although these costs will be kept as low as possible”.

All events, regardless of size, have a cost to the Council (and its companies). The Council is unable to subsidise costs, for example, staff time, hiring of equipment and services, organisation, set-up and clear-down. These costs will be passed on to all event organisers where incurred.

There is constitutional delegation of authority to be allow pricing flexibility to alter standard hire fees.

CATL adhere to The Council's Events policy and seek to recover some of the costs for local registered Charities and Community Groups. Specifically, the use of the bandstand is free for Community Groups, with any event which extends beyond the use of the bandstand charged a minimum £250 plus VAT fee. The bandstand programme is currently sponsored by the café operator in the Castle Park, and this enables use of this facility to remain free for Community Groups.

- 4.6 There has been a Cultural and Creative Events Fund 2024/25 in place, for which applications had to be made by 5th February 2024 for which Community Groups could apply for micro grants of between £250 and £1500 maximum for cultural and creative events/activity taking place between 1st May 2024 and 30th April 2025. Whilst these grants cannot be used for hire of Council assets, they can contribute to the overall event costs provided the applicant has funding to cover the hire of Council assets.

Background Documents

[Events Policy – Leisure Services Outdoor Events \(windows.net\)](#)

13 February 2024

Report of	Head of Sustainability	Author	Fiona Shipp
Title	Middle Mill Weir Collapse - Briefing		☎ 589250
Wards affected	Castle		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This briefing sets out the position at Middle Mill following the recent collapse of the weir in December 2023.
- 1.2 Middle Mill Weir is a structure that is owned by Colchester City Council (CCC), located on the River Colne next to Castle Park and consists of three flow channels. The northern and southern channels have flow control sluice gates, and the central channel is uncontrolled over the weir. The northern and middle flows, pass under a footbridge and the southern end passes under two brick arch culverts with a replica water mill wheel between the culvert sections.
- 1.3 A collapse of a section of the weir in Dec also led to the closing of the adjoining bridge over the River Colne. This bridge is owned and managed by Essex County Council. The bridge itself had shown cracking in its abutments and also is potentially at risk of being hit by any further collapse of the weir structures.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 For the Scrutiny Panel to be informed of the incident and to note the work being undertaken to remedy this situation in the short term and investigate options for a solution for the longer term.

3. Reason for Scrutiny

- 3.1 It is intended that when the options have been fully researched on how to remedy the situation longer term, they will be presented to cabinet for a decision.
- 3.2 The situation has gained a lot of media and local interest and the Scrutiny Panel has requested an update.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The Environment Agency (E.A.) used to operate the sluice, but this operation was handed back in approx. 2015. This was the case with many Environment Agency operated sluices around this time. Since then, the Castle Park Rangers have taken over operation of the sluices to reduce flood risk upstream at times of high rainfall/high water levels.
- 4.2 Regarding the bridge at Middle Mill, we believe the ownership, responsibility and maintenance sit with Essex Highways from when they became the Highway Authority. Bridge Asset number 2007.

4.3 Timeline

July to Nov 2023 – leaks had been noted by the sluice and Officers believed that maybe some debris had got caught in the sluice gate causing a visible bubbling of the water next to the sluice, which needed a clear out. It's common for this to happen at this time of year when the sluice is being operated often.

30th October 2023 – email from Colchester Canoe Club concerned about cracks in abutments of Essex County Council owned bridge next to Middle Mill Weir. Reported to Essex County Council for inspection. They felt there had been no change since 2017 and did not take any further action.

Week beginning 4th December 2023 – Park Ranger noted on inspection that part of the weir had been undermined by water erosion causing a significant sudden drop in water levels in the river. The Environment Agency were informed. Cracks noted in brickwork.

10th December 2023 – Park Ranger reported collapse of part of the weir structure. Bridge was then closed, initially by CCC staff as a temporary measure, then Essex County Council did this more formally later the same day. See appendix A.

20th December 2023 – 30 x Tonne bags of ballast installed in river around part of the collapsed structure to try and prevent further erosion of the remains of the structure. See Appendix A.

8th January 2024 – Middle Mill Weir Working Group set up and held first meeting. Meeting now held fortnightly.

4.4 Summary of Steps Taken to Date

- Bridge closed by Essex County Council
- 30 x Tonne bags of ballast installed.
- Contractor asked for high level costs for 3 initial options.
- Working Group set up.
- Structural Survey undertaken 17th January 2024 (report received 22nd Jan)
- Formal bodies contacted for professional opinion on impacts of weir loss and potential options going forward.

4.5 Options

Currently three options are being investigated:

- i. Removal of the damaged and washed-out sections of the weir including the last pillar that remains. This is likely to need to happen sooner rather than later. The structural

report confirms that some sections should be removed but also that further investigation is required on others. Some sections may be salvageable.

- ii. Potential replacement of the weir with a smaller weir structure to hold water levels slightly higher upstream. EA confirmed this would also need to include a fish pass structure.
- iii. Replacement of the structure meeting current laws/guidelines and Environment Agency requirements. Would need to include a fish pass.

For all of the above options planning permission and Environment Agency permitting will be required. (planning 12 weeks from submission and EA permitting 8 weeks)

A potential add-on option if the weir is not replaced, is to enhance the riverbed for wildlife by installing gravel bars and adding meanders. However much of this process will happen naturally within the first few years. This would be positive work considering the current climate change emergency.

4.6 Key Areas of Further Work (identified so far)

- Look at structural report and commission further investigation work.
- Continue to consult with key bodies and local community groups.
- Apply for retrospective Environment Agency permit for emergency works that were already undertaken.
- Liaise with Essex County Council representatives regarding the bridge and opportunities/requirements for joint works.
- Confirm approval process and provide options paper for formal approval.
- Apply for planning permission (depending on option chosen)
- Apply for Environment Agency permit for works (depending on option chosen).
- Tender any works required.
- Time works to avoid mid-summer and mid-winter due to river conditions.
- Ongoing management of Media and Councillor enquiries.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 5.1 At this time the diversion that is in place is causing concern with residents who are having to take a long detour which is not a smooth surface for its full length This is physically disadvantaging elderly residents, wheelchair users, parents with children and prams and for cyclists. We have highlighted these issues and concerns to ECC.
- 5.2 The diversion is the responsibility of the bridge owner Essex County Council and the route of the diversion is partly owned and managed by Essex County Council and partly a path on unregistered land.
- 5.3 The route is not lit for its full route and potentially raises issues around community safety, although there is no obligation to provide a lit route.

6. Standard References

Shown below in paragraphs 7-13.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 Moving forward this project will highlight a choice of options which are currently being researched. Consideration will then need to be given to their links to the Strategic Plan regarding the heritage nature of the structure and also regarding the opportunities for environmental enhancement of the river. In particular:

Celebrating our Heritage and Culture

- Enhance and promote our heritage by better revealing our assets by supporting projects and initiatives to increase public awareness and access to their heritage in daily life.

Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability

- Minimise the environmental impact of our activities.
- Enhance environments to create more space for nature to grow and thrive through natural seeding and greening.

8. Consultation

Relevant local groups have been contacted for their opinion regarding the broad options that are currently being looked into. Their responses will be collated and used to help put together the pros and cons of each of the options. This will then form part of the paper to cabinet for decision.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 Contact has already been made with formal bodies who have an interest in the weir. They have been asked for their formal opinion on the 3 broad options we are currently looking at. They are; The Environment Agency, Natural England, Anglian Water, Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust, and English Heritage.

9.2 We will also be consulting formally with local community-based groups who are potentially affected by or who have local interest in the weir. These include Colchester Canoe Club, The Civic Society, Colchester Natural History Society, CO1 North Residents Association and Friends of Castle Park.

10. Financial implications

Initial high levels costs for removal of the structure and installation of the new weir structure have been received. The company were not able to quote for the replacement option at this stage, until they know what work we planned to do around removal first, this will determine the required work and the price.

On discussion with the Environment Agency, it was clear that a fish pass would be required for any new structure, and this could cost up to £100k potentially on top of costs already quoted.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 No specific health and wellbeing considerations have been identified at this stage.

11.2 Community safety concerns around the lack of lighting as mentioned above.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 The current health and safety issue for the public lies around the bridge closure which the public are regularly trying to breach rather than take the longer diversion route. The responsibility of this closure and diversion lies with Essex County Council.

12.2 CCC Park Rangers are keeping a daily check on the area to help with monitoring this and reporting of any issues. They are also monitoring the remains of the weir structure for any further deterioration.

12.3 CCC Health & Safety Officer is fully informed of the situation and forms part of the Working Group to ensure this is considered in all aspects of the work.

12.4 Essex County Fire and Rescue Service have been informed.

13. Risk Management Implications

Corporate Risk

There is a financial risk of further collapse causing damage to the ECC owned bridge immediately downstream and integral to the structure.

Any change in river flow raises concerns from the public regarding potential flooding.

Concerns have been raised regarding longer term structural effects of lower water levels on the riverbanks and questions asked about the knock-on effect for structures next to the river.

With lower water levels we will not be able to refill the boating lake at Castle Park during the summer months or after any clearing out. We are considering the immediate and longer-term implications of this.

Community Aspect

In approx. 1993 Colchester Canoe Club started use of the weir for white water practice, training thousands of canoeists over the years. For the last 3 years it has particularly benefitted their freestyle team with a member becoming junior European champion. The junior section of freestyle is very successful with 3 members undertaking initial training with the British junior team. The canoe club are keen to have the weir replaced and improved for canoe use including portages (steps for getting in and out of a boat) either side.

There are concerns about the exposed riverbed mud looking unsightly and being smelly.

Property

Estates team have checked ownership. The weir is owned by CCC and the bridge is owned and maintained by ECC.

Flood Risk Aspect

An initial meeting was held with E.A. representatives on 22 Jan 2024 and they confirmed that there is no increased flood risk resulting from the loss of the weir. A formal response is expected in writing in follow-up to this meeting.

Heritage Aspect

The structure is old and had good aesthetic value. It had some repairs particularly to the water wheel which was removed and repaired in approx. 2000/2001 along with brickwork repairs in the chamber. Heritage England have been asked for their opinion and confirm that the asset is not designated, and as it is not on their 'At Risk' Register, it would likely not be eligible for their grant assistance programmes unless the weir serves a purpose in protecting other nearby designated heritage assets from river water damage.

Water Quality

Anglian Water have been consulted and there is the need to continue to inform them of any works causing disturbance which may cause siltation of the water or add any other debris to it. This directly effects their abstraction point upstream of East Bay Weir. (downstream of Middle Mill). They have also been asked for formal feedback on the potential options.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 Opinion has been sought from the following key bodies:

Environment Agency, Natural England, Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, and Essex Wildlife Trust. Initial feedback suggests that the complete removal of the weir structure has large environmental benefits.

Appendices

Appendix A - Photos

Appendix A

Weir Showing ballast bag protection installed 20th Dec 2023



Weir showing initial collapse in December 2023



13 February 2024

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Owen Howell ☎ 282518
Title	Work Programme 2023-24		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out the current Work Programme 2023-2024 for the Scrutiny Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and approve the contents of the Work Programme for 2023-2024, or request amendments, additions and/or deletions.
- 2.2 The Panel is asked to identify any additional specific issues, matters or areas of Council operations which it wishes to scrutinise during the 2023-24 municipal year, and to provisionally schedule these items, subject to feedback from relevant officers on any issues which may affect reporting timescales.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Panel’s work programme evolves as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting the opportunity is taken for the work programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances. The draft work programme for 2023-24 is appended to this report. This contains the items which are reviewed each year by the Panel.
- 3.2 The Forward Plan of Key Decisions is included as part of the work programme for the Scrutiny Panel, and this is included an **Appendix A**.

4. Standard References

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

5. Strategic Plan References

5.1 Scrutiny and challenge is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2023-2026 priorities and direction for the area as set out under the strategic themes of:

- Respond to the climate emergency;
- Deliver modern services for a modern city;
- Improve health, wellbeing and happiness;
- Deliver homes for those most in need;
- Grow our economy so everyone benefits;
- Celebrate our City, heritage and culture.

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

Appendices

Appendix A – Scrutiny Panel Work Programme, 2023-24

Appendix B – Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 1 March 2024 to 30 June 2024

Work Programme for 2023/24

Scrutiny Panel meeting – 6 June 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 1 June 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2023-24 2. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel meeting – 4 July 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 29 June 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year End 2022/23 Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action Plan 2. Capita data breach 3. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel (Crime and Disorder Committee) - 19 September 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 14 September 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)
Scrutiny Panel – 3 October 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Briefing – 28 September 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Neighbourhood Services and Waste] 2. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Housing] 3. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 14 November 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 9 November 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Leader of the Council/Strategy] 2. Budget Strategy for 2024-25 3. Skills: How Able is Colchester to Develop the Skills Needed for the Future? 4. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 12 December 2023
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 6 December 2023
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Economy, Transformation and Performance] 2. Half Year 2023-24 Performance Report 3. Key Performance Indicators Benchmarking Report 4. Strategic Plan Action Plan progress 5. Work Programme 2023-24

Scrutiny Panel meeting - 23 January 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 18 January 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Resources] 2. 2024-25 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, Medium Term Financial Forecast, Treasury Management Investment Strategy, Housing Revenue Accounts Estimate and Housing Investment Programme 3. Business case for charging for the kerbside collection of garden waste 4. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel - 13 February 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 8 February 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Leisure, Culture and Heritage] 2. Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2024-25. 3. Arts Organisations receiving Council funding 4. Middle Mill Weir: repair and future [Interim report] 5. 'Fit for the Future' programme 6. Council's approach and policy towards the use of owned community assets and whether to charge for use 7. Asset Management Strategy 8. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel meeting– 12 March 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 7 March 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Communities] 2. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Planning, Environment and Sustainability] 3. Local Highways Panel 4. Middle Mill Weir: repair and future 5. Town Deal projects progress report 6. Impact Evaluation of City Status 7. Scrutiny Panel Annual Report 8. Work Programme 2023-24
Scrutiny Panel (Crime and Disorder Committee) – 18 March 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 14 March 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)

Items still to schedule, when possible:

- Previous Council negotiations with Alumno [Monitoring Officer advice is that this will only be able to be scrutinised in open session once the current ongoing legal situation is resolved regarding the Queen Street site]
- Planning trial of local prioritisation for property purchasing [relating to a recent planning application] [Officer advice is that this is likely to need to wait until it is ready for meaningful scrutiny of scheme and outcomes, expected at some point in 2023-24]

COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS 1 March 2024 – 30 June 2024

During the period from 1 March 2024 – 30 June 2024* Colchester City Council intends to take 'Key Decisions' on the issues set out in the following pages. Key Decisions relate to those executive decisions which are likely to either:

- result in the Council spending or saving money in excess of £500,000; or
- have a significant impact on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards within the City of Colchester.

This Forward Plan should be seen as an outline of the proposed decisions and it will be updated on a monthly basis. Any questions on specific issues included on the Plan should be addressed to the contact name specified in the Plan. General queries about the Plan itself should be made to Democratic Services (01206) 507832 or email democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk

The Council invites members of the public to attend any of the meetings at which these decisions will be discussed and the documents listed on the Plan and any other documents relevant to each decision which may be submitted to the decision taker can be viewed free of charge although there will be a postage and photocopying charge for any copies made. *All decisions will be available for inspection on the Council's website, www.colchester.gov.uk*

If you wish to request details of documents regarding the 'Key Decisions' outlined in this Plan please contact the individual officer identified.

If you wish to make comments or representations regarding the 'Key Decisions' outlined in this Plan please submit them, in writing, to the Contact Officer highlighted two working days before the date of the decision (as indicated in the brackets in the date of decision column). This will enable your views to be considered by the decision taker. Details of the decision makers are correct at the time of publication.

Contact details for the Council's various service departments are incorporated at the end of this plan.

If you need help with reading or understanding this document please telephone (01206) 282222 or textphone users dial 18001 followed by the full number that you wish to call and we will try to provide a reading service, translation or other formats you may need.

*The Forward Plan also shows decisions which fall before the period covered by the Plan but which have not been taken at the time of the publication of the Plan.

KEY DECISION REQUIRED	DOES DECISION INCLUDE EXEMPT INFORMATION (or information defined by the Government as Confidential)	DATE OF DECISION or PERIOD DECISION TO BE TAKEN	DECISION MAKER (title and name, including Cabinet, portfolio holders and officers) – details of decision makers correct at time of publication	DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED OR TO BE SUBMITTED TO DECISION MAKER TO CONSIDER (and from where they are available)	CONTACT DETAILS FROM WHICH DOCUMENTS CAN BE OBTAINED (name of the authors of the reports)
Award of contract for the upgrade of thermal elements and deck areas to flats at Trinity Square	No	February 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>
Award of contract for retrofit installation to combat fuel poverty	No	February 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>

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Award of Contract for Gas Servicing	No	February 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>
Authority to award Contract for Delivery of Energy Improvements for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Project – Package 2	No	February 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>

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Award of Contract for Construction Consultancy Services	No	February 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>
Award of Contract for the Installation of Communal Doors in the HRA portfolio	No	March 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>

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Award of Contract for the Installation of Loft and Cavity Wall Insulation in the HRA portfolio	No	March 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>
Award of Contract for the Installation of Disabled Adaptations in the Housing Revenue Account portfolio	No	March 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>

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Award of a Contract for the delivery of Fire Doors and Fire Compartmentation at Winstree Court and The Cannons Sheltered Schemes	No	March 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>
Fit for the Future Transformation Plan	Yes	13 March 2024	<p>Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers)</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Cabinet report	<p>Melissa Kemp-Salt Director of ICT & Transformation, Epping Forest District and Colchester City Councils melissa.kemp-salt@colchester.gov.uk 07971 340551</p>

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Asset Management Strategy	Yes	13 March 2024	<p>Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers)</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Cabinet report	<p>Patricia Barry Patricia.barry@colchester.gov.uk</p>
Hibernation of Colchester Amphora Housing Limited	Yes	13 March 2024	<p>Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers)</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Cabinet report	<p>Richard Carr Managing Director Interim Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd Richard.carr@colchesteramphora.com 01206 282241</p>

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Colchester Community Stadium Lease Arrangements	Yes	13 March 2024	Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet report	Elizabeth Simpson Head of Estates Elizabeth.simpson@colchester.gov.uk 07966 238918
Request for delegated authority for the award of Housing Revenue Account contracts for the 2024/25 Housing Investment Programme financial year.	No	13 March 2024	Cabinet (Cllrs King, Burrows, Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith, Sommers) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet report	Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488

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Award of Contract for the Installation of Domestic Heating in the HRA portfolio	No	April 2024	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Paul Smith</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Martin Norgett Strategic Client for Asset Management martin.norgett@colchester.gov.uk 07816 204488</p>

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