

17 June 2020

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Assistant Director, Place and Client Services</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Owen Howell</b> ☎ 282518
<b>Title</b>	<b>Review of actions from Panel recommendations in 2019/20</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	Not Applicable		

## 1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides a summary of actions and workstreams which have followed on from recommendations made by the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel during the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

## 2. Action Required

2.1 To note the actions reported.

## 3. Reason for Review

3.1 Following requests for a report to inform the Panel of progress made in relation to the recommendations it made in 2019/20, officers confirmed that this would be provided in 2020/21.

## 4. Background Information

4.1 In 2019/20, the Panel made a number of recommendations relating to the subjects which it considered. The recommendations made are given below, with information given on the work which has progressed from them. A list of all requests made for Cabinet to approve the addition of items to the Panel's Work Programme can be found at Appendix A.

### Recommendations made relating to services and enforcement relating to dog owners (made on 19 June 2019).

4.2 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that:-

- (i) The Council website is updated to include a responsible dog ownership page to provide dog owners with information on responsible dog ownership and compliance with the law;
- (ii) The Animal Services Team continue to support the free CBC Neighbourhood Team events, CBH 'Make A Difference Days' and Police-led events;
- (iii) The Council continue to provide a free dog microchipping service;
- (iv) A publicity drive is carried out to increase public awareness of Council enforcement action regarding dog fouling;
- (v) The existing Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) covering the Colchester Rugby Club is expanded to cover all play areas and sports pitches in Colchester Borough and that this is publicised;
- (vi) The Council pursue a multi-agency approach to tackle fouling issues, where practical, and direct Neighbourhood Teams to temporarily increase

their presence in areas where dog fouling is known to be common, followed by publicity of enforcement action taken.

- 4.3 Following Cabinet's approval of the recommendations made by the Panel, officers from Neighbourhood Services acted and have confirmed the following:
- The PSPO covering Mill Road Rugby Club is still in place and will remain in place until 1 November 2020.
  - Before the introduction of lock-down to combat Covid-19, there was a rota in place for all wardens to patrol the PSPO area and fixed penalty notices have been issued, when needed, as enforcement action against dog fouling and owners allowing dogs to be off their leads in the area.
  - At the current time the Council does not have the capacity to carry out enforcement action on a large scale, but the wardens for this area continue to carry out patrols and the area has now been added for weekend patrols.
  - The Council has now made a Borough-wide PSPO targeted at preventing dog fouling. This PSPO came in to force on 25 November 2019 and is currently scheduled to end after three years, on 25 November 2022

Recommendation relating to the Council's preference for segregated cycleways and footways (made on 31 July 2019).

- 4.4 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that a letter be sent to Essex County Council [ECC], supporting the work of Councillor Bentley [Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, ECC] in examining this issue, noting protocols and statutory consultation rights regarding cycleway installations, and stating Colchester Borough Council's support for segregated cycleways, wherever feasible.
- 4.5 The Cabinet Office has confirmed that Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation, wrote to Councillor Bentley on 24 October 2019 to raise the issues in question, and give the Council's preferences regarding cycleways and footways. A copy of this letter is appended to this report as Appendix B.

Recommendations relating to supporting the use and protection of the River Colne (made on 31 July 2019).

- 4.6 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that: -
- a) The Cabinet approves the drafting of a vision document for a River Colne partnership involving all local authorities along the Colne, stakeholders and interested others to seek out funding and implement a vision that accounts for the upper, middle and lower River Colne and estuary, to be developed in a phased way starting with access and control and with the Hythe and funding options as focal points, and;
  - b) This document be brought back to the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel for further discussion and public comment before being sent to the Cabinet for approval.
- 4.7 Following Cabinet approval of these recommendations, Catherine Bailey, Planning Policy Officer, spearheaded the work to be carried out to pursue work towards the drafting of a vision document. Up to the point at which the Covid-19 lockdown came into force, the main areas of progress were:
- Cabinet approval for the drafting of a vision document given in September 2019

- An Officer group meeting was held on 13 December 2019 to discuss the brief for this work
- The New Strategic Priorities River Project Board was set up January 2020 and further funding for this work was agreed
- A project brief was developed through January and February 2020, and a copy is appended to this report as Appendix C
- The Final Brief was sent out to tender on 21 February 2020
- One return was received from Land Use Consultants on 6 March 2020

4.8 Unfortunately, owing to the effects of the situation relating to Covid-19, the Vision project is on hold for the time being as it is substantially about stakeholder engagement. It would have been exceedingly difficult to initiate meaningful and comprehensive engagement under lock-down/social distancing conditions.

4.9 Because the funds for this work were not yet committed in early March 2020, officers were advised that it may be necessary for these funds to be redirected to support front-line service provision during lockdown. At time of writing this report, the financial effects of the Covid-19 crisis are still being assessed insofar as these affect the Council's income and expenditure and the Medium-Term Financial Forecast (MTFF). The Council is conducting financial scenario planning and implementing recovery operations. The funding initially agreed for the work of the River Project Board may be reassessed in light of these efforts.

Recommendations relating to the potential for a Youth Zone to be set up in the Colchester Borough (made on 27 November 2019).

- 4.10 *RECOMMENDATION* to CABINET: - That, in light of the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel's support for the potential provision of a Colchester Youth Zone, the Cabinet:
- (a) Conducts a forensic 'deep-dive' examination of potential funding for a Colchester Youth Zone, to ensure sustainability of both capital and revenue funding;
  - (b) Examines options for partnership working on a Colchester Youth Zone, with priority given to securing the partnership and support of Essex County Council;
  - (c) Assesses the potential impacts that a Colchester Youth Zone would have within the Borough, including impacts on reducing antisocial and criminal behaviour, improving health, skills and life opportunities for young people and long-term benefits for the wider communities of the Borough.
- 4.11 As had been explained at the Panel's meeting on 27 November 2019, an options appraisal was already underway, having been commissioned previously by Cabinet to look at Youth Provision across Colchester and to consider what works well, if there are gaps and going forward what options there are for improvement. Following this, if it was agreed that a Youth Zone was the right way forward then part of the project work would include a more in-depth feasibility looking at key elements such as location and funding.
- 4.12 The initial Options Appraisal was fed back to the Council's Leadership in early March and did suggest that a Youth Zone would provide benefits to Colchester and that there were gaps in current Youth Provision. Given this feedback, Leadership invited Onside (the charity which facilitates Youth Zone provision) to a meeting to discuss the next steps. Whilst still very keen to pursue a Youth Zone for Colchester, the practicalities of finding a suitable location and raising the funding required were recognised as a huge challenge especially given that

Essex County Council (ECC) have informally said it does not support this approach.

- 4.13 Key partners have been engaged, with Police, Health and Voluntary Sector partners amongst those who are supportive of a Youth Zone. ECC have however not formally confirmed their support and this would be key to progressing, given the funding required. No specific partner funding has been secured at this time and, given the Covid-19 crisis, further talks have halted.
- 4.14 Whilst the vision to deliver a Youth Zone in Colchester is still an ambition, no further steps have been taken at this time given the impact of Covid-19 hitting the Country and the sudden shift in priorities and focus that this has necessitated for the Council.
- 4.15 Onside and the Council's options appraisal both shared more generic learning from existing Youth Zones that demonstrated that very positive outcomes are possible; this was also shared with the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel by Onside. No further exploration of this has taken place but would be a key element of any future project should Cabinet decide to proceed.
- 4.16 It has been acknowledged that Cabinet were fully supportive of the idea of a Youth Zone and had progressed to discussions with Onside, the providers, and partners. Whilst acknowledging that the funding required would be a huge challenge, and would require the support of Essex County Council, there is great evidence from existing Youth Zones that these facilities make a massive difference to the lives of Young People and so discussions were ongoing. The Covid-19 crisis has however now halted any further work at this time. Given the severity of the crisis on the Council, Businesses and Communities of Colchester, the Council's recovery planning will include a review of priorities. Whilst the provision of a Youth Zone remains an ambition that may be needed more than ever in the years to come, the reality of delivering one has become an even greater challenge that the Council cannot face alone.

Recommendation that options be explored for High Street traffic reduction (made on 20 January 2020)

- 4.17 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that alongside consultation and engagement exercises linked to each of the above work programmes, Officers commission a study looking at the options for reducing traffic in the High Street.
- 4.18 Rachel Forkin, Transport and Sustainability Manager has confirmed that the Council has not yet commissioned a study looking at options for reducing traffic in the High Street. This work is linked with the Colchester Transport Strategy, which is being produced by ECC in partnership with CBC. However, timescales for this study and engagement exercises have been impacted by the current situation regarding Covid-19 and a new timescale will need to be calculated.
- 4.19 In addition to this, this work will now need to be closely linked with plans for recovery in the town centre and the new statutory Government guidance on reallocating road space in response to COVID-19. The guidelines set out how 'the government expects local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians. Such changes will help embed altered behaviours and demonstrate the positive effects of active travel.'

- 4.20 ECC have released a press release setting out how they are looking to achieve this in town centres in Essex.
- 4.21 The relevant Government guidance can be found via the following link:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>

Recommendation relating to secure cycle storage provision (made on 20 January 2020)

- 4.22 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that officers be directed to explore options for secure and covered public cycle storage in the Town Centre and at key locations, and explore options for secure and covered cycle storage in residential areas, consulting with residents as appropriate and sourcing information as to the cost of potential options to meet identified demand. This should be carried out as part of wider work already progressing on cycle initiatives and efforts to complete the network of cycle routes in Colchester.
- 4.23 The Council has completed the tender process and are currently in the process of appointing consultants to carry out this work. This should start in the very near future, although the current circumstances regarding Covid-19 will have an impact on site visits and consultation. This work will cover both identifying key locations and options (e.g. management, type of facility) for secure cycle parking in the town centre, as well as exploring options for secure cycle parking facilities in residential areas, and will link in with the wider work progressing on cycle initiatives within Colchester.
- 4.24 Rachel Forkin, Transport and Sustainability Manager, is currently working with the teams looking at recovery in the town centre, with regard to cycle parking facilities. However, at this stage no further information on this is yet available.

Recommendation regarding enforcement against antisocial use of fireworks (made on 4 March 2020)

- 4.25 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that the Panel be given approval to investigate ways for the Council to reduce antisocial uses of fireworks and add this public initiative/policy request to its work programme for 2020/21.
- 4.26 This recommendation is currently awaiting Cabinet approval. Should approval be granted, the Panel will be able to add this subject to its Work Programme.

Recommendations to Cabinet requesting approval for the Panel to add items to its Work Programme

- 4.27 During 2019/20, The Panel made a number of requests seeking Cabinet approval for it to investigate a range of issues. These are all included in the list of recommendations shown at Appendix A. All requests were granted, with exception of the following, made on 25 September 2020:
- 4.28 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that approval be given for the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel to examine potential options for providing or supporting the provision of a new lifelong learning centre in the Borough of Colchester.

4.29 Cabinet considered this recommendation but did not give approval. As the responsibility for adult learning provision was held by Essex County Council, it was considered that it would not be appropriate for consideration by the Panel.

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

5.1 This report has no direct implications relating to Equality, Diversity or Human Rights; however due consideration is given to any such implications attached to the individual decision making and actions detailed within the report.

## **6. Standard References**

6.1 There are no specific references to consultation considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

7.1 This report details different project workstreams with numerous effects on, and implications for, the Council's Strategic Plan and Priorities. It should however be borne in mind that the Council's Strategic Plan may need to be revised in response to the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. In such an eventuality, project work will be reassessed, according to how it will help to achieve the priorities within any new Strategic Plan.

## **8. Publicity Considerations**

8.1 The reporting back on actions resulting from recommendations from the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel gives an opportunity to showcase positive work being carried out to achieve the Council's Strategic Plan and its priorities. This enables members of the public to gain a better understanding of different elements of the work undertaken by Council, especially where this is in relation to initiatives brought forward by members of the public.

## **9. Financial implications**

9.1 As noted in section 6 of this report, there are no direct financial implications. It is, however, important for the Panel to note that a reassessment may become necessary for any finances which had been identified for specific project work but not yet committed prior to the outbreak of Covid-19

## **14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

14.1 There are no specific environmental or sustainability implications.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – List of Work Programme recommendations made by the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel in 2019/20

Appendix B – Letter from Councillor Martin Goss, Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation, to County Councillor Kevin Bentley, ECC Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, regarding cycleways and footways

Appendix C – Project Brief for Colne River Vision Document