

Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Old Library, Town Hall
29 November 2011 at 6.00pm

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

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

You have the right to attend all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Cabinet. You also have the right to see the agenda, which is usually published 5 working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published. Dates of the meetings are available at www.colchester.gov.uk or from Democratic Services.

Have Your Say!

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

Private Sessions

Occasionally meetings will need to discuss issues in private. This can only happen on a limited range of issues, which are set by law. When a committee does so, you will be asked to leave the meeting.

Mobile phones, pagers, cameras, audio recorders

Please ensure that all mobile phones and pagers are turned off or switched to silent before the meeting begins and note that photography or audio recording is not permitted.

Access

There is wheelchair access to the Town Hall from St Runwald Street. There is an induction loop in all the meeting rooms. If you need help with reading or understanding this document please take it to Angel Court Council offices, High Street, Colchester or telephone (01206) 282222 or textphone 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.

Facilities

Toilets with lift access, if required, are located on each floor of the Town Hall. A vending machine selling hot and cold drinks is located on the ground floor.

Evacuation Procedures

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e-mail: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk

www.colchester.gov.uk

Terms of Reference (but not limited to)

1. To review corporate strategies and strategic partnerships to ensure the actions of the Cabinet and Portfolio Holders accord with the policies and budget of the Council.
2. To monitor and scrutinise the financial performance of the Council, and make recommendations to the Cabinet particularly in relation to annual revenue and capital guidelines, bids and submissions.
3. To link the Council's spending proposals to the policy priorities and review progress towards achieving those priorities against the Strategic / Action Plans.
4. To scrutinise executive decisions made by Cabinet or Cabinet Member, the East Essex Area Waste Management Joint Committee, the Colchester and Ipswich Joint Museums Committee and the North Essex Parking Partnership (decisions relating to off-street parking only) which have been made but not implemented, and referred to the Panel through call-in.
5. To monitor the Council's operational performance in relation to the Strategic Plan and Performance Indicators, and the Cabinet's performance in relation to the Forward Plan.
7. The panel will be the appropriate route for any member to refer a 'local government matter' in the context of Councillor Call for Action.

Process for Councillor Call for Action

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

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

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

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

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
29 November 2011 at 6:00pm**

Members

Chairman : Councillor Andrew Ellis.
Deputy Chairman : Councillor Dennis Willetts.
Councillors Kim Naish, Gerard Oxford, Colin Sykes,
Nigel Chapman, Nick Cope, Bill Frame, Theresa Higgins and
Will Quince.

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

Agenda - Part A

(open to the public including the media)

Members of the public may wish to note that agenda items 1 to 5 are normally brief and agenda items 6 to 9 are standard items for which there may be no business to consider.

Pages

1. Welcome and Announcements

(a) The Chairman to welcome members of the public and Councillors and to remind all speakers of the requirement for microphones to be used at all times.

(b) At the Chairman's discretion, to announce information on:

- action in the event of an emergency;
- mobile phones switched off or to silent;
- location of toilets;
- introduction of members of the meeting.

2. Substitutions

Members may arrange for a substitute councillor to attend a meeting on their behalf, subject to prior notice being given. The attendance of substitute councillors must be recorded.

3. Urgent Items

To announce any items not on the agenda which the Chairman has agreed to consider because they are urgent and to give reasons for the urgency.

4. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman to invite Councillors to declare individually any personal interests they may have in the items on the agenda.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Minutes

1 - 10

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on the following dates:

11 October 2011

25 October 2011

6. Have Your Say!

(a) The Chairman to invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition at this meeting – either on an item on the agenda or on a general matter not on this agenda. You should indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

(b) The Chairman to invite contributions from members of the public who wish to Have Your Say! on a general matter not on this agenda.

7. Items requested by members of the Panel and other Members

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

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

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

8. Referred items under the Call in Procedure

To consider any decisions taken under the Call in Procedure. *The panel may a) confirm the decision, which may then be implemented immediately, b) refer the decision back to the decision taker for further consideration setting out in writing the nature of its concerns, or c) refer the matter to full Council in the event that the panel considers the decision to be contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with the Budget.*

9. Decisions taken under special urgency provisions

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

10. Review the Council's ongoing regeneration programme for St Botolphs Quarter in the Town Centre

11 - 15

See report from the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration.

The Portfolio Holder for Renaissance has confirmed her attendance for this review.

Immediately following the conclusion of the St Botolphs Regeneration review, the Portfolio Holder will remain in attendance to respond to any questions members of the Panel may have in regards to the Strategic Plan Priorities that have been achieved within this portfolio. The achievements listed below are as reported to Cabinet in July 2011. This information will be updated within the Strategic Plan Action Plan and reported to the Panel at the December meeting.

In the meantime, members may wish to ask the Portfolio Holder what further progress has been made.

The achievements:

Community Development:

Work with communities to release resources to deliver a range of community facilities continues with a number of specific projects underway.

A number of key activities undertaken to increase skills and reduce worklessness including training and skills.

Job Creation:

Redundant rural buildings have been brought back into commercial use.

Planning gain and additional sources of funding have been secured to increase apprenticeships, employment and training.

Work to sustain business growth in North Colchester has seen a further £500k secured for a creative incubator in the town centre.

Congestion Busting:

A12 junction has been delivered ahead of schedule.

11. Work Programme

16 - 18

See report from the Scrutiny Officer.

12. Exclusion of the public

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

11 OCTOBER 2011

- Present :-* Councillor Dennis Willetts (Chairman)
Councillors Nigel Chapman, Theresa Higgins,
Kim Naish, Gerard Oxford, Will Quince and Colin Sykes
- Substitute Members :-* Councillor Nigel Offen for Councillor Nick Cope
Councillor Sonia Lewis for Councillor Andrew Ellis
Councillor Ray Gamble for Councillor Bill Frame
- Also in Attendance :-* Councillor Nick Barlow
Councillor Mike Hardy
Councillor Pauline Hazell
Councillor Beverley Oxford
Councillor Paul Smith
Councillor Anne Turrell

15. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 30 August 2011 was confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Theresa Higgins (in respect of being the Chairman of the Board of the YMCA) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

16. Local Government Resource Review: Proposals for Business Rate Retention and Localising Support for Council Tax

Presentation

Finance Managers Mr. Sean Plummer and Mr. John Fisher attended the meeting and introduced the report on Local Government Resource Review: Consultation response on the Proposals for Business Rate Retention and Localising Support for Council Tax, both of which will have significant implications for Local Government finance and therefore Colchester Borough Council's budgets.

For the Proposals for Business Rates Retention and Localising Support for Council Tax in England, Appendix A and B of the main report respectively set out the questions in the consultation, comments on the implications of each area, together with a proposed draft response.

Mr. Plummer and Mr. Fisher presented the key points and issues relevant to Colchester for both consultation papers.

Business Rate Retention

Background

The Government Spending Review set out the path for public sector funding, that for Colchester Borough Council means grant cuts of 15.2% and 9% for 2011/12 and 2012/13 respectively. The Local Government Resource Review highlighted the need to provide strong incentives for local economic growth and change in local authority behaviour.

The way National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) bills are calculated and how they are billed and collected are not proposed to change, with NNDR bills based on Rateable Value (RV) x the national multiplier. The current income collected by Colchester, a sum of £56m, is paid over to central Government. Colchester receives a 'formula grant' from central Government, partly funded from the NNDR pool, plus the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), that in 2011/12 reduced by £1.7m, to £9.3m.

Under the new proposals, the main change relates to the link between business rates and our formula grant. The majority of business rates collected will be retained 'locally' but will be subject to a "levy" to recoup disproportionate gain and will then be used to fund support for areas suffering from any unforeseen fall in business rates. The council's initial level of funding will be set using the 2013/14 Formula Grant allocation as the baseline so that at the start of the system the budget will be equivalent to what it would have been under the current system. There is therefore no "new money" and, in theory, 'no council is worse off at the outset'.

The baseline would be subject to a set of "tariffs" and "top ups" to equalise across the Country any disproportionate effect of councils who have a large or small business rate pool compared to their level of grant funding. For Colchester, and for other authorities operating in two-tier counties, the proposals include arrangements for allocating business rate income between district and county. Two different methods are proposed which based on estimated figures will mean that almost 90% of business rates collected would be shared with Essex County Council. Colchester therefore, is likely to be a 'top up' authority as the level of retained business rate income will be lower than the baseline funding.

The proposals provide for any increase on the baseline figures to be kept, however, this will actually be influenced by three things, i) the amount of money assigned to ECC (the 87% for example), ii) the extent to which the top up is fixed or inflated, and iii) the proposals for operating a levy that reduces any 'disproportionate' growth.

Under the proposed option, authorities may establish a "pool". This means that a group of councils can for the purposes of NNDR retention agree to treat themselves as one body. For example all Essex districts and the ECC could agree to form a pool. The overall baseline position for all authorities would be the aggregate of all NNDR retained +/- tariffs and top ups. One of the perceived advantages of this is that it is a way to help all manage volatility across the County and also to have some influence on how the shared funding is used.

Over time, the proposals will impact on the how the Council is funded and the level of funding. When firm proposals are set out it will be necessary to consider how this will impact on the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Forecast. Other proposals

were discussed such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Renewable Energy Projects and changes to the administration of Council Tax Benefit (CTB).

The major issues for Colchester were discussed, such as, the challenging timescale for implementation, the significant financial risks posed by the reforms, the significant additional resource demands for the design of the new schemes and the suggestion that the CTB grant could be fixed for a number of years.

Localising Support for Council Tax in England

Principally, the Council will be required to create a local scheme based on a Government framework, setting out how to meet demand within budget; involving consultation and scrutiny, including collaboration with other authorities to the extent of sharing risk.

Overall, as things stand, there is no clear guidance about how authorities will work out what people are entitled to, despite indications that it should be similar to now, in association with the new Universal Credit. This creates the prospect of different schemes from one council to another, with the potential to cause confusion and disputes, for example between neighbours, or contention and appeals to the council.

The proposed changes to Council Tax benefit (CTB) are happening in conjunction with a reduction of around £500m in total funding, equivalent to 10%. There is no indication of how this 10% reduction will be distributed between authorities and therefore it is possible that there will be different cuts to achieve the average reduction.

The timescale for implementation is considered challenging and poses significant financial risks for Essex Authorities, for example, the ability of people to pay for something they have previously not had to, the impact on Council Tax collection and the affect on the arrears recovery process.

General discussion

Councillor Paul Smith, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Heritage informed the Panel that he had attended a meeting of eastern region councils, chaired by Councillor Finch, Essex County Council Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation Programme, saying some of the issues that were raised and which he felt needed to be emphasized were:

- i) The financial risk, given the current economic climate, of the Government's growth forecast.
- ii) The transfer of financial risk to Local Authorities, who would prudently require larger levels of reserves to mitigate risk.
- iii) The fear of the disaster scenario, where councils will find it difficult to mitigate against large local employers going out of business or relocating to a different area, and the knock-on affect to Councils of the huge reduction in business rates collection and the sharp increase in unemployed people claiming benefit.

Councillor Sykes commented that the proposals are disappointing, shifting money around and receiving grants as something else, that the expectation was much greater than the outcome. Councillor Sykes disappointment was echoed by Councillors Chapman and Offen.

Councillor Chapman said it was a missed opportunity, with too many caveats. In response to Councillor Chapman, Mr. Plummer said in regards to 'pooling', there are many different kinds of 'pools' mentioned in the consultation papers. Pooling is a voluntary option for all Councils. It is anticipated that Council's will work 'pools' within the County boundaries. There may be an opportunity for cross-county boundary pooling, e.g. between Colchester and Ipswich, but the consultation proposals set out the opinion that this would require County Council approval.

In response to Councillor Offen, Mr. Plummer said the strengths for Colchester lay in the detail, with a key change in the grant scheme shifting from 'need' over time, to benefit Councils who see business rate growth, an opportunity to increase business rate income by incentivising growth in businesses and housing development.

Mr. Plummer confirmed to Councillor Gamble that Business Rate and Council Tax billing and collection remained a local authority function with all the costs associated with this work absorbed by the responsible Council. This would not change under the new proposals.

RESOLVED that the Panel;

- i) Thanked Mr. Plummer and Mr. Fisher for an excellent presentation and resume, and for responding to questions from the Panel.
- ii) Noted the report on the Proposals for Business Rate Retention and Localising Support for Council Tax, the consultation responses and the potential implications for the Council, considering the response to the Proposals for Business Rate Retention to be reasonably balanced and realistic.
- iii) Requested the Cabinet to note the comments from the Panel in respect of the consultation response to Localising Support for Council Tax, particularly the following;
 - a) In reference to 'Localism', question 5a should be expanded to include;

"The Council believes that localism is not appropriate as an alternative to the current Council Tax Benefit scheme and does not fit the proposed changes, creating a post code lottery in benefits".
 - b) The response to question 5b should be expanded to include;

"The Council believes it needs greater flexibility than proposed, and is particularly concerned how balancing a fixed budget will vary over time: considering the increase of the number of pensioners and vulnerable people as they get older, increasing the burden of the grant reduction on the fewer less vulnerable people".

c) The response to question 6e should be expanded to include;

“The Council is concerned that the potential reduction of benefit to low paid workers may discourage them – that people may feel they’d be better off unemployed. The Council agrees the strategy to encourage people to work, but not penalise them by paying them less Council Tax Support as a result, which is likely to mostly affect this group by the Government’s 10% grant reduction”.

d) Under the response to question 10d: Placing applicants into categories, the list of categories to be headed “In no particular order”.

17. Work Programme

Councillor Willetts, on the advice of Mr. Robert Judd, Scrutiny Officer informed the Panel that the substantive item arranged for the meeting on the 1 November 2011, the Fundamental Service Review of Sports and Leisure Services, had, due to need for further work to be undertaken, been withdrawn.

With no further work scheduled for this meeting, Councillor Willetts asked the Panel that time permitting, if there was anything they felt could be reviewed to notify this to Mr. Judd. Councillor Willetts suggested that unless Mr. Judd was notified of items for review by Monday 17 October the meeting would be cancelled.

RESOLVED that the Panel considered and noted the Work Programme, agreeing to the cancellation of the 1 November 2011 meeting if no additional business is forthcoming.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

25 OCTOBER 2011

Present :- Councillor Andrew Ellis (Chairman)
Councillors Nick Cope, Theresa Higgins, Kim Naish,
Gerard Oxford, Will Quince, Colin Sykes and
Dennis Willetts

Substitute Members :- Councillor Sonia Lewis for Councillor Nigel Chapman
Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell for Councillor Bill Frame

Also in Attendance :- Councillor Beverley Oxford

Councillor Kim Naish (in respect of being a member of the Board of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Colin Sykes (in respect of his spouse being a member of the Board of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

18. Colchester Borough Homes Fundamental Service Review - Progress review of Customer Experience and Access

Mr. Greg Falvey, Chief Executive, Colchester Borough Homes, Ms. Karen Loweman, Director of Housing, Colchester Borough Homes, and Mr. Mark Wright, Director of Property Services, Colchester Borough Homes, all attended the meeting for this review.

Presentation

Mr. Falvey, Ms. Loweman and Mr. Wright gave a joint presentation on Colchester Borough Homes – Changes to the way we work.

Mr. Falvey thanked the Panel for inviting Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) to talk about their Fundamental Service Review, explaining that the model adopted by CBH was as that used by other service areas within the Council.

Ms. Loweman spoke about the key priorities of the review, being about a flexible and responsive customer service, an easy to access service, consistency in the customer experience, focus on skill and capability of staff, increase partnership with others, a streamlining of systems and processes, improvement in technology and the identification of efficiencies and savings. Ms. Loweman explained that CBH had consulted widely with customers and stakeholders and was using technology to move away from paper based systems to help improve its customer service.

The review was modelled around enabling technology and data, behaviours and processes. The actions and outcomes, as shown in the progress report to the end September 2011, were discussed. These included enabling the community and

tenants to do more for themselves, developing joint work with the communities, reprocessing the systems and ways of working to increase skills and allow greater flexibility and empowerment, and to join services to maximise productivity.

Mr. Wright explained that the planned savings included a £300,000 target saving in 2011/12, that officers were confident of achieving, to be followed by a further £110,000 per year for 2012/13 and 2013/14. It was anticipated that £10,000 of increased income would be achieved in 2011/12 through a variety of new initiatives.

The achievements as this stage included a new staff structure resulting from the review, in place since August 2011. A staff training programme in partnership with the Colchester Institute was in place to increase skills and empower staff to address customer enquiries at the first point of contact, a multi-skilled Customer Services Team was now based at the Greenstead Office, and a new tenant involvement structure was now in place.

Mr. Wright gave details of the key performance indicators for monitoring progress, showing that since the implementation of the changes resulting from the review, performance on rent collection (97% of rent collected), empty property re-let times (28 days and 20 days for general needs accommodation) and repairs satisfaction (92% and rising to 96% in the last three months) was evidence of improving service delivery.

In terms of continuation, the services provided are improving with empty property re-let times going down as well as a reduction in rent arrears. A family intervention project for Colchester has been developed and the first National Citizenship programme introduced. Work Experience and apprenticeships continue to be provided for young people and visible improvements are being delivered to the community.

Mr. Falvey spoke about the work in progress included the joining of the Anti Social Behaviour teams in Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Borough Homes, with additional training to provide greater enforcement powers, further development to make better use of the Greenstead Office, and the expansion of flexible working to provide evening and Saturday morning appointments for repairs and improved efficiency in repair planning.

Mr. Falvey said there had been ten redundancies as a result of the FSR, 7 voluntary and 3 compulsory, and projects are now in place to commence further work in achieving savings in the second and third years of the review, with further developments planned to provide smarter procurement (orders and invoices) processes, improved Human Resource strategies and marketing services to provide additional income.

General discussion

In response to Councillor Willetts concerning 'sensitive testing', given the difficulty in reconciling better services with a reduction in costs, Mr. Falvey said the new methodology, providing different workflows and new processes had enabled a

reduction in staffing levels. Whilst there is a fear that customer service or performance may falter, processes and performance are continually tracked and adjustments if needed will be made.

Ms. Loweman confirmed that performance monitoring measures are in place to be able to track processes. Overall performance levelled off at the initial stage of implementation before an increased expectation, helped by new efficiencies found during and after implementation. The situation remains fluid and can be adjusted, and officers are very aware that the customers are quick to tell them when something is not working well and needs changing. Mr. Wright said the most contact with customers is through housing repairs, and tenants are subsequently surveyed and the results tracked as part of an intensive monthly monitoring programme. Mr. Wright said customer service survey results are improving.

Mr. Falvey said in regards to Governance, periodical performance reports are presented to CBH Performance Sub-Committee. Tenants are used as mystery shoppers and 100 tenants are surveyed monthly to get valuable feedback on services.

In response to Councillor Willetts concerning zonal-working for housing services to mirror those zones adopted by Street Services, Ms. Loweman said both services have undergone their FSR at a similar time and are both keen to operate zones that mirror one another. Officers from both services work well together and Street Services Zone Managers and Housing Officers are meeting regularly to develop ideas together.

Responding to Councillor Scott-Boutell, Mr. Falvey said in respect to engaging with young people, CBH are involved in a variety of forms of youth engagement. A new Youth Forum, in its infancy stage, is being progressed, with involvement from a Board Member of CBH and a Housing Officer, and was very much an ambition of CBH. Ms. Loweman said officers try to get representation from all age groups on Tenant Groups, but to get proper representation cannot be guaranteed. CBH officers work towards the strategic ambition of proper and continual engagement with young people, especially those in the 18-25 years age group.

Mr. Falvey said the Greenstead Office was not just a base for Housing Officers, but a central hub to be used as a port of call for local people for public or quasi public services and a suitable location for youth services.

In respect of the use of the Gosbecks Road facilities by outside services, it was an opportunity to generate income, with parking spaces hired by the Library Services buses and other services. A significant number of parking spaces had been freed due to changes in respect of employees being able to retain their vehicles overnight. In response to Councillor T. Higgins concerned about a local problem of CBH vans parking in residents parking areas in New Town, Mr. Wright said if Councillors contacted CBH with the details they would where appropriate make alternative arrangements. In response to Councillor Ellis, Mr. Wright said company vans are fitted with trackers so usage can be monitored. Managers are generally flexible with staff using vans during the week, though vans cannot be used at weekends.

Ms. Loweman apologised to Councillor Scott-Boutell about the problems she had

experienced when recently contacting CBH. Ms. Loweman said improvements had now been made to the effectiveness of the telephony service, which had experienced teething problems when CBH had transferred to the CBC IT Telephony system when relocating to Rowan House and the original Wellington House system had been transferred to the Greenstead Office. Faults had been identified and are being ironed out e.g. picking up missed calls. Councillor Ellis said his telephone communication with CBH over the last two weeks had been positive.

Responding to Councillor T. Higgins, Ms. Loweman said the Equality Impact Assessment that considers the impact of the implementation of the FSR has begun, but is not complete. In regards to the I-Connect system to be used for all customer contacts, it was not a direct interface with the back office and had not yet been implemented due to a double handling (web and paper based) of information. It was however noticeable that communication with young people is predominantly through the mobile telephone route. Mr. Wright said CBH will be introducing a texting system (investigating whether to use a different telephone number) that enabled officers to text tenants to tell them “we are coming to visit you now, are you there or shall we come on another occasion?”

In response to Councillor Sykes in regards to the new staffing levels and resources following the FSR, a common theme running through the report(s) in various forms, Mr. Falvey said ‘shared resources’ was a common theme, for example, a new post share at a senior level with South Essex Homes, currently being piloted and that will bring additional savings and improve strategic financial thinking.

A recruitment freeze was introduced during the review. The review itself raised expectations and with changes to be made there was a natural turnover of staff during this period. Recruitment followed, as part of the implementation plan, and some redundancies were made as part of this process, shifting to an enabling function as identified on page 5 of the presentation.

Ms. Loweman said the staffing numbers changed but there was not an exact shift of personnel from one function to another. New roles were introduced and some roles disappeared. Managers also looked to increase opportunities for tenants, with 60 tenants and leaseholders used as quality assurance assessors, volunteering roles, to give direct feedback on the services provided. The responses are closely monitored, with feedback a key part of the service monitoring process.

The overall staff structure now had fewer management layers, with more generic team leaders managing in a more multi-skilled way.

Councillor Cope was supportive of the changes that embraced new technology, but was cautious about development of new ideas, and did not want it to result in older people feeling disengaged. This could be an issue if they felt out of the loop. Whilst acknowledging this concern, Councillor Lewis said the biggest waiting list for Age UK and activity centres for older people was to be involved in IT training and development, that many older people wished to embrace new technology and are taking the opportunity to learn these skills.

RESOLVED that the Panel;

- i) Thanked Mr. Falvey. Ms. Loweman and Mr. Wright for an excellent presentation and resume, and for full and positive responses to questions from the Panel.
- ii) Noted the report on the progress made on the implementation of the Business Case for the Fundamental Service Review of Colchester Borough Homes.

19. Work Programme

Councillor Ellis took the opportunity to confirm to the Panel the letter received from the Care Quality Commission in response to the concerns expressed to them by the Panel in regards to the HX Care Serious Case Review.

A much fuller response, both Councillor Ellis and Offen noted that the new legislation appeared to be much tighter and was welcomed. In the circumstances they believed there was no reason to pursue the matter further at this time, though a letter of thanks would be sent to the CQC.

In regards to the deferment of the Sports and Leisure Fundamental Service Review and subsequent cancellation of the meeting on 1 November 2011, Mrs Pam Donnelly, Executive Director confirmed that an update (future date to be confirmed), as an interim measure, would be provided to the Panel, together with a reason for the original delay.

Mr. Robert Judd, Scrutiny Officer, in response to Panel, confirmed that the dates of all SOSP reviews were diarised for the respective Portfolio Holders, who were requested to attend the appropriate meetings so members of the panel could, if wishing to do so, ask questions about other aspects of work within the respective portfolio.

Mr. Judd confirmed he would check the availability of Portfolio Holders for all future meetings and would, for want of a better understanding, consider a way of noting the provision of this scrutiny within future agenda papers.

RESOLVED that the Panel considered and noted the Work Programme.



Strategic and Overview Scrutiny Panel

Item
10

29 November 2011

Report of	Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration	Author	Fiona Duhamel ☎ 282252
Title	Review the Council's ongoing regeneration programme for St Botolphs Quarter in the Town Centre		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

The Panel will review the Council's ongoing programme of development and regeneration in the St Botolphs area of the Town Centre and the extent to which delivery contributes to the Council's strategic priorities and policies.

1. Scope of review

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to review the progress of the Council's investment in the St. Botolph's Regeneration project. This progress will be presented to the Panel in the form of an interactive map providing details on developments and timescales.
- 1.2 To note progress on other schemes in the St Botolph's Area which are being delivered by partners.

2. Reasons for undertaking the review

- 2.1 The Council's Code of Corporate Governance states the aim for robust scrutiny, and a principle to engage with stakeholders to ensure public accountability.
- 2.2 The Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed to the review of this area at the meeting on 7 June 2011.
- 2.3 Members agreed to receive an update on the St Botolph's Regeneration project and all its component parts. Whilst members were aware of some of the individual smaller projects and initiatives, they felt it would be helpful to have an update which provided the whole picture, including all works / projects that have commenced / been completed, together with, where possible, the outstanding works and the progress to date.
- 2.4 To understand how the Council's initial investment in the area has triggered wider development activity undertaken by partners and other third party developers.

3. Representatives

3.1 The following persons will attend this meeting;

Councillors

Councillor Lyn Barton, Portfolio Holder for Renaissance

Officers

Ms. Lindsay Barker, Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration

Ms. Fiona Duhamel, Regeneration Programme Manager

Mr Ian Vipond, Executive Director

4. Supporting information

4.1 The St Botolph's regeneration area was formed following the creation of the St Botolph's Masterplan which was adopted by the Council in 2005. This was to address significant decline in the general environment and its wider impact upon the Town Centre economy.

4.2 The Masterplan set out a clear framework for the regeneration of the area with defined delivery objectives including the creation of a new International arts venue, new retail areas and homes together with additional public spaces, improved green spaces and strong connectivity between new and existing buildings and the wider Town Centre.

4.3 Work on the delivery of these key projects and others in the area has been underway for a number of years and the presentation to SOSp will seek to demonstrate how these projects link together using a map based tool, providing an update on key milestones and programme timescales, set out emerging projects for the area and review ongoing and future funding opportunities. The attached map with key projects identified will form the basis of the presentation which includes the following developments:

4.4 A number of projects have already completed and these include: Firstsite, Phase 1 of the Public Realm Project, Phase 1 of St Botolphs Priory Improvements and Berryfield Park.

4.5 Some projects are on site and these include Greyfriars and Magistrates Court

4.6 Some projects are at planning or in legal discussions such as Town Station Square, East Hill House and the Queen St Hotel

4.7 And some projects are moving forward through the feasibility stage such as the Creative Business Centre including the initial phase of the garages conversion to studio spaces, the upper floors of 15 Queen St and Vineyard Gate

4.8 It is important to note that the St Botolphs Regeneration area now forms part of the ongoing Better Town Centre Programme, launched in 2010, which brings together current and future projects in the wider Town Centre under 9 themes and sets out a common vision to preserve and enhance the town's unique identity whilst encouraging closer working between the Council, its partners and its stakeholders.

4.9 Many of the projects in the St Botolphs area are being delivered by third parties or by the Council working closely with one or more private sector partners and it is particularly important to consider this alongside delivery timescales as the fact many of these schemes are still being progressed in the current economic climate reflects, in a very positive way, the level of commitment to and desire to invest in Colchester.

5. Strategic Plan References

5.1 The regeneration of St Botolphs will realise Colchester's potential as a preferred destination for visitors, businesses and investment.

5.2 The regeneration of the area also seeks to deliver significant job creation opportunities and to develop the skills economy, in particular within the Creative Sector and the Tourism Sector.

6. Consultation

6.1 Ongoing consultation has been carried out within specific projects in respect of planning applications and pre planning consultation. Consultation and engagement has also continued in respect of key stakeholders such as access groups and bus operators for the town centre traffic and transport, business groups in respect of a wide range of projects and local residents and other identified groups who have a specialist interest.

7. Publicity considerations

7.1 Publicity opportunities have been ongoing through the Better Town Centre Programme with regular engagement events held in the town, a dedicated website and other stakeholder meetings. This overarching project seeks to demonstrate the links between key projects, many of which are in the St Botolphs area. In addition, a communications plan is being drawn up for the St Botolphs area which highlights key milestones and seeks appropriate publicity and engagement.

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no specific financial implications to highlight in respect of the whole St Botolphs Quarter regeneration, however it should be noted that significant investment has been made in the area through a variety of sources but increasingly from the private sector through the redevelopment of key buildings such as Greyfriars, East Hill House and the proposed Vineyard Gate scheme

9. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 9.1 EQIA's have been developed for the key regeneration projects managed by the Council. See attached link for Q:\Strategic Policy & Regeneration\Regeneration\Regeneration Projects\d.Town Centre\3144 - HTCI\Traffic and Transport Study\Equality Impact Assessment\HTCI Assessment.doc

10. Community Safety implications

- 10.1 There are no specific community safety implications however generally it is anticipated that improvements to this part of the town centre through regeneration will benefit in particular the Colchester after Dark theme of the Better Town Centre Programme

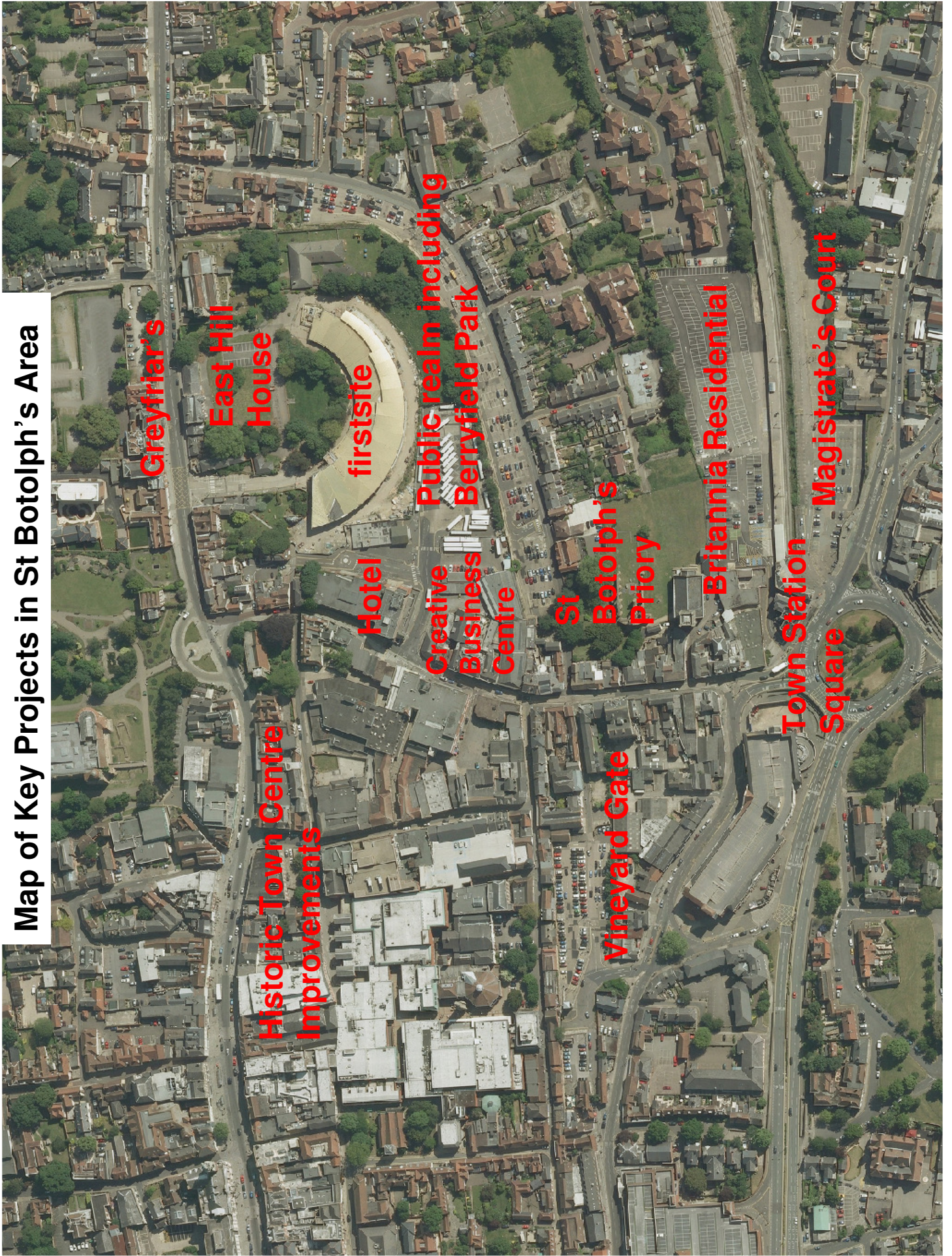
11. Health and Safety implications

- 11.1 There are no Health and Safety Implications

12. Risk Management implications

- 12.1 There is a risk register for the Better Town Centre Programme which includes St Botolphs. Each project also has a risk register which is reviewed monthly.

Map of Key Projects in St Botolph's Area





Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Item

11

29 November 2011

Report of	Scrutiny Officer	Author	Robert Judd
Title	Work Programme 2011-12		Tel. 282274
Wards affected	Not applicable		

**This report sets out the 2011-12 Work Programme for the
Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

1. Action Required

1.1 The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the 2011-12 work programme.

2. Reason for Action

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

3. Additional item / meeting

3.1 No change

4. Outstanding Items for review

4.1 The following items will be scheduled in due course, the review of the Customer Strategy and the Street Services implementation of the FSR Business Case.

Meeting date / reviews	Portfolio	Strategic Plan Priority achievements
<p>19 July 2011</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Strategy, Timetable and MTF Review of the Arts Trial - doorstep collection of food waste (pre scrutiny) 	<p>Leader & Strategy / Resources and ICT</p> <p>Commerce and Sustainability</p> <p>Street and Waste</p>	
<p>30 August 2011</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee) 	<p>Housing and Community Safety</p>	<p><u>Community Safety:</u></p> <p>Work to reduce anti social behaviour continues with reduced levels being achieved across the borough.</p> <p>Community days of action continue to be held every 4 months.</p> <p>Community street wardens have delivered over 1000 activities and are now a valued and embedded part of our communities.</p> <p>Dedicated graffiti team has been in place and performing well.</p>
<p>11 October 2011 (extra) (The Old Library)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation response – Business Rates Reform (Resolution to Cabinet 12-10-11) 	<p>Resources and Heritage</p>	
<p>25 October (replaces 20 September 2011)</p> <p>Colchester Borough Homes – Fundamental Service Review</p>	<p>Housing and Community Safety</p>	<p><u>Addressing Older Peoples Needs:</u></p> <p>Encouraged over £1.2m of benefits take up for older people</p> <p>Reviewed all the councils sheltered housing schemes</p> <p>Achieved joined up public service commitment to provision of frontline advice and guidance through info point.</p> <p><u>Homes For All:</u></p> <p>Help has been provided to keep people in their own homes includes reduced use of temporary accommodation, closer working with partners, review of processes and at least 300 households have been prevented from becoming homeless.</p> <p>Our Local Development Framework requires 35% of all new homes be affordable.</p> <p>Our decent homes work is on target.</p> <p>Private sector housing standards are being enforced.</p>
<p>1 November 2011 (meeting cancelled)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sport and Leisure - Fundamental Services Review (to be re-arranged) 	<p>Communities and Diversity</p>	

<p>29 November 2011 (extra meeting)</p> <p>1. An overview of the St Botolph's Regeneration project</p>	<p>Renaissance</p> <p><u>Community Development:</u> Work with communities to release resources to deliver a range of community facilities continues with a number of specific projects underway. A number of key activities undertaken to increase skills and reduce worklessness including training and skills. <u>Job Creation:</u> Redundant rural buildings have been brought back into commercial use. Planning gain and additional sources of funding have been secured to increase apprenticeships, employment and training. Work to sustain business growth in North Colchester has seen a further £500k secured for a creative incubator in the town centre.</p>
<p>13 December 2011</p> <p>1. Review of the Budget Strategy 2. 2011-12 6-monthly Performance report 3. Strategic Plan Action Plan 2012-15</p>	<p>Leader & Strategy / Resources & Heritage Leader & Strategy</p>
<p>10 January 2012</p> <p>1. Public Transport in the Borough</p>	<p>Renaissance / Street and Waste</p> <p><u>Congestion Busting:</u> A12 junction has been delivered ahead of schedule Planning application for a Park and Ride has been submitted. <u>Reduce, Reuse and Recycle:</u> Carbon emissions have been reduced by 987 tonnes per annum. Partnership working to deliver a county wide approach to reuse household items and materials is in progress. 87% of Colchester's schools are now registered with Eco-Schools compared with only 3% five years ago.</p>
<p>14 February 2012</p> <p>1. Review of Colchester Community Stadium Limited - Chief Executive, Chair David Murthwaite to attend</p>	<p>Communities and Diversity</p> <p><u>Community Development</u> Work with communities to release resources to deliver a range of community facilities continues with a number of specific projects underway. A number of key activities undertaken to increase skills and reduce worklessness including training and skills development.</p>
<p>20 March 2012</p>	

