



Policy and Public Initiatives Panel

Item
11

17 June 2020

Report of Assistant Director Place and Client Services **Author** Mandy Jones
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Title Approach to Council and Panel's work programme 2020-21

Wards affected Not applicable

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out items for current Work Programme 2020-2021 for the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel, providing details of the items of business currently scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.
- 1.2 This report also sets out a suggested approach to inclusion of future topics for the work programme for 2020-2021, taking into account the effects of the current Coronavirus pandemic and ensuring alignment with the work that is taking place on the development of the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plan.
- 1.3 The Council's Recovery Programme (and other strategic priorities) have led to a number of public and partner engagement exercises being planned, or already underway. These will provide the Council with valuable insight from members of the public and partners and a future steer for the Recovery Programme. A report outlining the development of the Recovery Programme was presented to Cabinet on 3 June 2020.
- 1.4 These consultations and engagement exercises with partners, stakeholders and members of the public can provide the Panel with subject matter for the consideration of future policy and public initiatives. This will enable the Panel to align work with the Covid-19 Recovery programme and consider policy matters emerging from that programme. It is therefore suggested that the results from existing, planned and emerging consultation and engagement exercises (in addition to other methods for including items as outlined in 4.1) are used to provide topics for inclusion in the Panel's 2020-21 workplan.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the Panel's Work Programme for 2020-2021 as set out below and to confirm the appropriate scheduling of work for the next municipal year.
- 2.2 The Panel is asked to approve the approach taken to generating topics for the workplan linked to the current Recovery Plan and ongoing consultations as outlined in 1.4 and section 4 below and consider these in the next meeting of this Panel.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 This function forms part of the Panel's Terms of Reference and, as such, no alternative options are presented.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The Policy and Public Initiatives Panel's Work Programme will evolve as the municipal year progresses. Items can be added to the Work Programme in two ways, either through Cabinet approving a request from the Panel, or Portfolio Holders and Cabinet requesting policies, strategies or other issues be reviewed. The Panel may also receive outline scoping reports on service reviews that are taking place across the Council and these will be added to the work programme when appropriate.
- 4.2 As the report to Cabinet of 3 June entitled 'Council Recovery Programme (Covid-19)' noted the Covid-19 crisis has had a profound effect on our communities, our economy and the Council as an organisation and once the intensity of the pandemic has passed there is widespread recognition that life may not return to what was previously considered 'normal' life. The degree of change required across the borough and in the way the Council operates as a result of Coronavirus cannot be overstated; the lives of all residents have been impacted and every service has been affected, with all officers across the Council aware of the human cost of Coronavirus.
- 4.3 With reference to the above, the development of a recovery plan is one of the major priorities for the Council as there is widespread acknowledgement that we will not have 'business as usual' in the way we understood it before Covid-19, but we will need to prepare for a 'new' or 'next' normal.
- 4.4 Work undertaken by the Council on the development of the Recovery Plan and the resulting development of policy and linked actions will need to be prioritised and balanced with the considerable financial pressures experienced by the Council as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic (see the 3 June 2020 Cabinet report of Assistant Director – Corporate and Improvement Services: Covid-19 budget changes 2020/21 and budget strategy 2021/22).
- 4.5 **The Council's Covid-19 Recovery programme**
The Recovery Programme is organised into four main areas of work or 'cells': Economy, Community, Customers and Council. Cross-cutting themes run through all cells and will be reflected and balanced in the emerging plan. These are: Finance, Housing (including Colchester Borough Homes), Climate Change and Sustainability and the work of CCHL and the Amphora Companies.

The objectives for each cell area are outlined below with detail:

Economy:

- Colchester Borough becomes stronger post-Covid-19;
- Opportunities are developed to ensure the new economy is greener and more inclusive;
- The programme stimulates the local economy and markets;
- The Town Centre becomes a more vibrant, resilient and adaptable place for people to visit.

Community:

- Levels of inter-organisational collaboration and new working practices brought about by Covid-19 crisis are sustained;
- Communities are strengthened to mitigate economic disruption, reduce isolation, and improve Health and Well Being;
- Pre-existing inequalities within and between communities are reduced;
- Increase in volunteering, civic engagement and building on the strengths within Communities.

Customer:

- Undertake a review of all customer access channels considering Covid-19;
- Keep customers updated with the resumption of council services;
- Support customers to ease financial pressures caused by Covid-19;
- Adopt new ways of working with customers.

Council:

- Restart Council decision making and public participation in a digital environment;
- Restore and adapt Council services harnessing the positive changes made;
- Revise our finances to deliver a balanced budget and sustainable Medium Term Financial Forecast;
- Reset the Council's strategic priorities;
- Reimagine and reinvent our services to meet our priorities and budget.

- 4.6 Further details of the developing Covid-19 Recovery programme and the work undertaken in response to the crisis are outlined in the Cabinet report of 3 June 2020, referred to above in paragraph 4.2, and the report presented to the same Cabinet meeting entitled: 'Council Response to Coronavirus (Covid-19).'
- 4.7 Future uncertainty and frequent changes in predictions caused by the Coronavirus pandemic means work planning and future policy development will need to be agile and flexible to accommodate and respond to these changes. Likewise, consultation exercises linked to future development of policy and action plans will need to follow this model of agility and flexibility.
- 4.8 As part of the development of the Recovery Plan, a separate Communications and Engagement Plan will be put in place and ensure consultation with partners, stakeholders and members of the public is properly built into the Recovery planning process.
- 4.9 The crisis has led to an increased focus on partnership working and a consequent emphasis on sharing citizen insight and joint ownership. This insight can be utilised alongside our own public and targeted consultation and engagement exercises for the development of policy and public initiatives linked to recovery from Coronavirus.
- 4.10 A number of consultation exercises are being undertaken or by the Council and partners which will inform the Recovery programme and can be used to develop the Panel's workplan. Some examples of this are outlined below. This is by no means an exhaustive list with more exercises likely to be undertaken to provide information for potential topics for the Panel's to consider including in their workplan.

- **State of Life Survey** Active Essex / University of Essex have teamed up with State of Life to find out how the current situation with coronavirus makes people feel about work, health, money, other people, and life in general <https://bit.ly/StateOfLife>
- **Colchester Borough Council Covid-19 Business Survey (closed):** This survey was undertaken to gauge to effects of the Coronavirus on businesses in the borough and levels of support they had access to and may need to inform the Economy cell of the Covid-19 Recovery programme.
- **Overcoming Barriers to Health and Wellbeing: Community Assets in North East Essex.** This major piece of qualitative research undertaken by Anglia Ruskin University on behalf of CBC and the Health Alliance looks at the role community assets play in enabling wellbeing. The research was extended to look at "life under lockdown" for community members across North East Essex.
- **Town Deal:** Work has been restarted on the Town Deal linking it to the Recovery Programme, and detailed community, partner and stakeholder engagement will be undertaken as part of the development of the Town Investment Plan.

4.11 The development, prioritisation, governance and oversight of the Recovery plan will be directed at portfolio holder level with major decisions brought to Cabinet. However, the recovery work and consultations will identify policy areas for this Panel to consider as part of its future work programme. The Panel could consider using the results of the above consultation exercises and future engagement alongside policy considerations emerging from the Recovery Programme for inclusion in the Panel's work programme. It is suggested that consideration is given to those policy areas for the workplan at the next meeting of this Panel.

5. Standard References

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

6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 Policy review is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing.

7. Environment and Sustainability Implications

7.1 Environmental and sustainability considerations are considered of paramount importance in the Recovery Programme and any work or policies emerging from it.

7.2 There is a specific 'Climate Change and Sustainability' cross-cutting work stream running through all the cells. Each policy area considered by the Panel will need to be considered in relation to the Climate Emergency Action Plan to ensure that the Council's climate change, environmental and sustainability ambitions and policies are actively addressed and promoted throughout the development of the Recovery Plan and any proposed policies brought forward in the future.

Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Work Programme 2020-21

17 June 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Update on Panel recommendations from 2019-202. Approach to Council and Panel's work programme 2020-21
5 August 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reduction of anti-social use of fireworks within the Borough2. Consultation exercises – Responses and policy area suggestions.
23 September 2020
25 November 2020
13 January 2021
3 March 2021

Requests awaiting consideration by Cabinet:

- None currently outstanding.