

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

5 AUGUST 2013

Present :- Councillor Julie Young (Chairman)
Councillor John Elliott (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors Nigel Chapman, Barrie Cook, Mark Cory
and Lesley Scott-Boutell

Substitute Members :- Councillor Sonia Lewis for Councillor Mark Cable
Councillor Jo Hayes for Councillor Colin Mudie

7. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 22 May and 17 June 2013 were confirmed as correct records.

8. Invited Guests

The Chairman welcomed five guests who had been invited to the meeting to assist the Panel members with their discussion on European Funding:

- Anita Cleary, Trustee, Hythe Community Centre
- Matthew Rowe, Director, firstsite
- Rebecca Bear, Programme Manager, Sustainabuild
- Tom Hodgson, Development Manager, Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service
- Clare Avery, Research and Business Partnerships Manager at the University of Essex

9. Delivering Community Benefits from EU Funding in Colchester

Councillor Chapman (in respect of his Board Membership of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services reviewing the past achievements of the Council in relation to European funded projects, noting the future context and priorities around EU funding investment and inviting the Panel to make recommendations to Cabinet about how Colchester could continue and increase access to EU funding in the future.

Josie Worner, Regeneration Partnerships Officer, explained that, in the context of restricted public finances, the Council was continuing to look at how it would raise funding to deliver new jobs, business growth, infrastructure, and opportunities for the community. In addition the Government had asked Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to draft a European funding strategy by Autumn 2013. For Colchester this role

was performed by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) which covered Essex, Kent and East Sussex. The strategy would determine the priorities for growth in the South East and set out a framework of projects that would be eligible for funding between 2015 and 2020. It would also link to the Strategic Economic Plans that LEPs were producing whilst setting the framework for how Government was likely to allocate its funding programmes, such as Growth Deals.

Josie went on to explain that, of the numerous European funding programmes, the Council had, to date, accessed Interreg and the East of England Competitiveness Programme. Interreg was managed by a secretariat on behalf of the European Commission and required development and delivery of projects working with partners in different countries within Europe. The Competitiveness Programme was managed at the UK level, and in the East was focused upon low-carbon growth.

In the future programme period (2015-2020), any source of European funding that the UK could access would need to be aligned to three priority themes:

- Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
- Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium sized businesses
- Supporting low-carbon economy across all sectors

The agreed vehicle for Colchester to influence the SELEP funding strategy was by means of the Essex Integrated County Strategy which was being refreshed and enhanced in partnership with other Essex local authorities as an Essex position on its sector strengths, opportunities for growth driven by innovation and competitiveness, opportunities for enhanced partnership working with higher education and industry and project pipeline. The SELEP had been provisionally allocated £165m of funding to deliver growth between 2015 and 2020, £82.5m of which would be aligned to innovation, small and medium sized business competitiveness, ICT and low-carbon initiatives underpinning this. The remaining £82.5m would be allocated to employability and skills and social innovation.

Recent EU funded projects in Colchester included:

- Transcoast which had secured €466,425 and seen the delivery of improvements to public areas and access routes in the Hythe and community engagement, including supporting Hythe Forward and interpreting the history of the area;
- CURE (Creative Urban Renewal in Europe) which had secured €212,000 and enabled the development of the Creative Colchester Strategy, temporary use of empty buildings and spaces and the architectural plans, planning consent and operating model for a Creative Business Centre as well as €120,000 towards refurbishment costs;
- SustainaBuild which had secured £371,800 with match funding drawn from the capital programme and staff salaries for Colchester Borough Homes. The project enabled the low-carbon refurbishment of the Council's Worsnop House Sheltered Housing scheme;
- Norman Connections had secured £132,000 and would deliver interpretation of Colchester Castle as part of its major redevelopment;
- The Creative Business Centre application was expected to be submitted in

September 2013. The project would be led by the Council, in partnership with the University of Essex and firstsite. If successful, the Council would secure £750,000 of a £2m project budget to deliver phase 1 that would provide 20 creative studios, a programme of business incubation, training and support, and include an exemplar low-carbon building concept.

The Chairman invited each of the guests in turn to address the Panel on the issues from their organisation's perspective.

Rebecca Bear explained that the SustainaBuild Programme was based in the East and aimed to stimulate low carbon economic growth and to provide support to construction sector small, medium sized enterprises to up-skill, diversify and collaborate to deliver retrofitting work. The Programme included the low carbon retrofit of a hard to treat housing block in Colchester to showcase best practice in resident management, technology and project management. The Programme was managed by Climate Energy and delivered in partnership with Colchester Borough Homes. The £1.7m value of the initiative was made up of £930k of capital works and £770k of support, project management and delivery.

Anita Cleary outlined the aims of the Transcoast Project which was to create a new landmark for the Hythe which would attract visitors and provide a new public space for locals to enjoy. Various Steering Meetings had taken place involving a wide range of interested groups from the Borough Council, local residents, Arts Groups, local businesses, the University of Essex, Community Groups, local churches and history groups. From these meetings initial designs were formulated which evolved over time which would improve the area of Hythe Bridge for the community.

Matthew Rowe, Director, firstsite, explained how the Creative Urban Renewal in Europe (CURE) Project was being used in Colchester to spark cultural and creative innovation to assist in the renewal of the St Botolph's Quarter. The Council had undertaken master planning for the area leading to plans for the development of a cultural and creative quarter initiated by the development of firstsite. The objectives within CURE were to:

- Develop and enhance public spaces and buildings
- Create a hub of business and networking spaces for the creative sector
- Create an identity for the quarter
- Involve local artists, creative entrepreneurs and businesses, and a diverse range of people from the local community in the process of renewal
- Produce, implement and test an innovative business model for a thriving creative business centre

As part of the development it was intended to implement a range of short-term activities that would improve the look of the area, start to create a new identity for the spaces and buildings, promote the positive changes taking place, involve the community and creative enterprises, and create an exchange of ideas, products, art, design, music, and people in the area.

Matthew went on to explain that it was hoped that CURE would ultimately:

- Be an economic driver – creating new jobs, developing the skills economy and networking and supporting existing businesses
- Assist cultural expansion by creating a welcoming new quarter for younger people, students, workers, visitors, families and older people
- Drive regeneration through creation of new public spaces, refurbishment of buildings and bringing them back into use
- Increase Colchester's profile as a centre for the cultural and creative industries

Tom Hodgson explained that the Norman Connections concept, which had been aligned with the redevelopment of Colchester Castle, had enabled Colchester and Ipswich Museums to reinforce the cultural and historical links with other Norman sites in the UK and Europe. The Castle redevelopment was delivering a major community resource and visitor attraction with over 100,000 visitors per year expected, a large percentage of whom would be tourists.

Norman Connections was providing £261,000 of match funding for the £4.2m redevelopment, whilst allowing the museum staff to learn much more about how a Norman Castle would have functioned and the historical and architectural context of Colchester Castle in particular. Ultimately the project would help visitors understand how the Castle would have appeared and functioned in Norman times by means of traditional signage and images as well as the use of 3D virtual reality modelling which is being developed through the EU funded part of the project.

Clare Avery provided the panel with detailed information about the University and its contribution to the local economy. The University had been founded in 1964, with a current vision to be 'a globally competitive, research intensive, student-focused university that takes seriously its economic, social and cultural responsibilities to the eastern region, the UK and the world.'

The University was ranked ninth in the UK for the quality of its research and 20th for student satisfaction. There were currently over 12,000 students from 137 countries with over 2000 members of staff. Whilst the Knowledge Gateway has the capacity to support 2000 more high value jobs.

New developments would provide a £200m capital investment programme to improve the educational facilities across the Colchester, Southend and Loughton Campuses. Whilst the Knowledge Gateway and Big Data initiatives involved a wide range of subjects:

- Combining datasets e.g. health & social care
- Safe Data Storage and retrieval
- Analysis and Modelling of Financial Data
- Algorithm design and data mining
- Artificial Intelligence and machine learning
- Genomics and biomarkers
- Natural language processing
- Tele-healthcare

The University students had undertaken numerous projects which were of interest to:

- Financial Services
- Creative Sector (Data visualisation)
- Market Research/ Polling
- Consumer Behaviour
- Crime, Health & Social Care
- Pharmaceutical
- Government – UK and Local

Particular discussion from the Panel members was in relation to:

- Other initiatives that would prove sustainable to fit the low carbon model;
- The need for successfully funded initiatives to be both new and innovative in order to access funding streams;
- The potential for domestic sprinkler systems to be put forward as a potential next phase of works for Colchester Borough Homes;
- The potential to use successfully funded projects elsewhere to address other issues relating to similar building types or methods of construction;
- The invitation given to Transcoast to join a cluster project as a learning and exchange opportunity for other low carbon energy initiatives around ports;
- The need to find innovative solutions which would unlock funding to deliver improvements for local communities such as the long standing problem of odour in the Hythe area;
- The work undertaken to date to investigate the possibility of constructing a barrage to provide sufficient water for boats to use the river and the benefits of working with all influential interested groups in partnership to address the significant problems within a community;
- The need for the transformation of the Hythe area to be linked with practical work from the University such as data gathering as well as other potential opportunities from the innovative new businesses area;
- The mechanisms proposed to provide for businesses and the public to access and use the buildings and spaces in the creative quarter;
- Whether provision is made for successfully incubated businesses to enter into 'recoupment' opportunities (the process whereby investors have the opportunity to recoup their funds) in order to reinforce the current 85% survival rate;
- The importance of publicising the fact that a network of over 750 businesses were engaging with the creative quarter buildings, in addition to the 20 resident businesses actually in occupation currently;
- The links between the creative and business sectors brought about by the forthcoming launch of the Colchester Enterprise Hub, which was focussing on how businesses start up and the assistance of established businesses to mentor and 'give back' to newer businesses coming forward;
- The need for measures to be explored to provide for vacant premises, such as empty shops and spaces above shop units, for businesses to move to after their initial start-up period;
- The many examples of cultural connections that could be explored across the UK and Europe, such as the Stanway Burial sites;
- The importance of getting University students engaged with real world problems and the potential to link this with academic assistance in sourcing appropriate

funding opportunities

RESOLVED that –

- (i) All the guests be thanked for their valuable contributions to the meeting

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) The following issues be borne in mind when consideration is given to how to maximise the benefits from EU funding for Colchester in the future:
- Acknowledgement to be given to the significant work already undertaken by the Council and with very limited resources to secure EU funding streams for the benefit of the community;
 - The need for continued support to be given by the Council to the identification of EU funding streams in the future;
 - The need for continued support to be available for the local Small and Medium Sized Enterprise sector and the creative industries in Colchester;
 - Opportunities be sought to work collectively with the University of Essex and Anglian Water to secure appropriate funding streams and to deliver tangible solutions to local issues of concern such as the odour problem in the area of the Hythe;
 - Efforts be concentrated on securing as much support as possible for Colchester from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, bearing in mind the extent of the geographical area that the SELEP covers and the need to align funding opportunities with the 2015-2020 three priority themes;
 - The need for greater awareness of the sources of funding from the EU to be generated within local communities;
 - The importance of finding projects which include elements of innovation and sustainability such as the domestic sprinkler example for Colchester Borough Homes to consider.

10. Work Programme 2013/14

The Panel considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive giving details of the preliminary scheduling of the business which had been accepted following suggestions by the Cabinet.

It was explained that the 20 mph Speed Limit Task and Finish Group Update would need to be deferred to the meeting in November 2013 in order to take account of meeting dates of the Local Highway Panel. Arrangements would, in turn, be made for an update from the Waste and Recycling Task and Finish Group to be submitted to the Panel's meeting in September 2013.

The Chairman referred to the topical issue of Fracking, the hydraulic fracturing of rock to release natural gas, and whether it would be possible for the Panel to receive a

report providing background information on the process and whether there were any associated implications for Colchester.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) The current situation regarding the Panel's work programme for the year be noted
- (ii) Cabinet be asked to consider the merits of a report being provided to a future meeting of the Panel giving details on the process of Fracking and its implications for Colchester.