

# Council

Wednesday, 19 July 2023

**Attendees:**

Councillor Tracy Arnold, Councillor Lewis Barber, Councillor Lyn Barton, Councillor Catherine Bickersteth, Councillor Molly Bloomfield, Councillor Michelle Burrows, Councillor Roger Buston, Councillor Mark Cory, Councillor Pam Cox, Councillor Robert Davidson, Councillor Paul Dundas, Councillor Andrew Ellis, Councillor Mark Goacher, Councillor Martin Goss, Councillor Jeremy Hagon, Councillor Dave Harris, Councillor Mike Hogg, Councillor John Jowers, Councillor David King , Councillor Richard Kirkby-Taylor, Councillor Darius Laws, Councillor Michael Lilley, Councillor Sue Lissimore, Councillor Andrea Luxford Vaughan, Councillor Jackie Maclean, Councillor Roger Mannion, Councillor Sam McLean, Councillor Sara Naylor, Councillor Steph Nissen, Councillor Chris Pearson, Councillor Carl Powling, Councillor Kayleigh Rippingale, Councillor Thomas Rowe, Councillor Lee Scordis, Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell, Councillor Fay Smalls, Councillor Paul Smith, Councillor Rhys Smithson, Councillor Natalie Sommers, Councillor Michael Spindler, Councillor William Sunnucks, Councillor Martyn Warnes, Councillor Dennis Willetts, Councillor Tim Young

**617 Prayers**

The meeting was opened with prayers from the Reverend Dr Amanda Elmes.

**618 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bentley, Jay, Law, McCarthy, Tate and J. Young.

**619 Have Your Say! (Council)**

Sir Bob Russell addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) to express his concern that the Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Biodiversity approved by the Local Plan Committee on 12 June 2023 had been undermined by the proposal for Holy Trinity Churchyard by the Colchester Town Deal Board. Should these proposals go ahead the SPD could not be used in respect of any other planning application, as any appellant would be able to claim the Council had

allowed it to be bypassed on its own land. There were only two Councillors on the Town Deal Board, one of whom was a County Councillor from Braintree. The attendance by the Leader of the Council, who was the only City Councillor on the Board, was only 60%. The minutes of the Board meetings were not complete. The proposal, which cost £500,000, would destroy Holy Trinity Church. The proposals to move the railings would create two areas that would attract anti-social behaviour.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, thanked Sir Bob for his comments and it was appreciated that this was a much loved site. The proposals would ensure that it remained usable and accessible. The proposals for greater access to the site had largely been welcomed. The We Are Colchester Board was widely supported by the Council and their work was subject to scrutiny. He had many calls on his time which meant he could not attend every meeting but he paid close attention to work on the city centre, including the Town Deal Board, and the proposals would stand the test of time. The proposals were not counter to the SPD and a written response would be sent to confirm the position. Partnership working was now crucial if the Council was to achieve its aims and to have the most influence and impact.

Carla Hales of the Essex Music Service and Essex Concert Band addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) to express her concern about the fees introduced by the Council for bands and groups to play on the bandstand in Castle Park. Whilst it was appreciated that there were commercial events at which it was appropriate to charge, there were some events where this was inappropriate. Essex Concert Band was a not for profit band made up of volunteers who played free of charge for the benefit of the public. This meant a regular commitment of time and cost for the members of the band. In this context it did not seem reasonable for the band to also be expected to pay a fee of approximately £100 for the hire of the bandstand. Other Council's did not charge and were choosing to support the provision of live music. This form of entertainment should be encouraged to attract people into the city centre. The decision to charge had made groups feel that the hard work they undertook to perform was not appreciated by the Council and two well-known bands had made the decision not to tour this year. There was a proud heritage of bands playing for the entertainment of local people and the bandstand provided live music for those who could not otherwise afford to attend concerts. The charges should be reconsidered.

Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, explained that the bandstand had been refurbished at a cost of £33,700. The Council had given a grant for an event on the preceding Sunday, which in effect paid the commercial fees of the bands playing. He would consider the matter further with officers and look at the commercial fees and the arrangements for support through grants.

Robert Johnstone addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1). He had played in several ensembles at the bandstand over a number of years. The event on the preceding Sunday run by the Rotary Club had featured five

bands and had been a true community event. None of the music groups were paid and neither had the audience paid. Everyone he had spoken to had agreed that the bandstand must remain free for local music ensembles. The commercial management of the bandstand was the cause of the problem. Colchester Events paid to manage the events put on in a range of Colchester venues, including the bandstand, but did not promote events at the bandstand at all. The audience at the bandstand wished to see local bands without charge. The bandstand should be removed from the list of venues managed by Colchester Events.

Elizabeth Kelly addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1). Colchester Castle Park and the bandstand had been a place of solace for the underprivileged enabling them to experience all forms of music free of charge. It was now proposed to charge small volunteer music groups, who gave their time and money for free, to perform on the bandstand. This was for the benefit of a highly commercial organisation whose sole intention was to make a profit. The Council should be able to provide residents with the opportunity to hear music without penalising the bands who played there, many of whom were underprivileged. Residents paid their taxes for such provision.

Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, thanked Robert Johnstone and Elizabeth Kelly for their comments which had been addressed through his reply to Carla Hales.

Sandy Armitage addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) to ask why the meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Panel on 20 July 2023 had been cancelled. Given the climate crisis there should be business for the Panel to consider.

Councillor Nissen, Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Panel, explained that the cancellation was due to a light agenda. The Panel had a work programme and there was insufficient business on the work programme for this particular meeting to justify the resources involved in holding a meeting. This was on the basis that there would be a fuller agenda in September and the time would be used for a discussion on the developing waste strategy. This decision had been taken in conjunction with the spokespersons of the other political groups. Work continued by officers, and environmental issues were being embedded into all decision making across the Council and into the Council's Strategic Plan.

**620 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Council)**

*RESOLVED* that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

**621 Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor reported that together with the Deputy Mayor he had attended the Songs of Praise recording in the Castle Park and announced the following events:-

Civic Service, 23 July 2023

Opening of the Oyster Fishery, 1 September 2023

**622 Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-23**

*RESOLVED* that the recommendation contained in draft minute 399 of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 14 March 2023 be approved and adopted.

**623 Changes to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy**

*RESOLVED* that the recommendations contained in the Head of Governance's report be approved and adopted.

**624 Suspension of Procedure Rule**

*RESOLVED* that Council Procedure Rule 11(2) be suspended to allow the motion on Anti-Social Behaviour in the City Centre to be debated and determined.

**625 Anti Social Behaviour in the City Centre**

**Councillor T. Young (in respect of his employment by Open Road) declared a non-registerable interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 9(5).**

It was proposed by Councillor Nissen that:-

*If our city is to thrive, residents and visitors must feel safe.*

*This Council notes the rising incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the historic city*

*centre and surrounding neighbourhoods, which include:*

- damage to property;*
- harassment and abuse of staff and customers in the retail and hospitality sectors;*
- thefts from shops which harm businesses and which can heighten vulnerability experienced by retail staff and customers.*

*We call on the City Council and local Community Safety Partnership:*

- to develop and implement a new Anti-Social Behaviour Plan to tackle these issues;*
- to lead a new collaboration with Essex Youth Services to develop and resource a new Youth Outreach Strategy to engage more effectively with those young people currently involved in ASB;*
- to bring together adult social care, health and substance misuse services to map efforts to address the causes of ASB*
- to work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to review policing resource for Colchester.*

Councillor King proposed the following main amendment.

*That the motion on Anti-Social Behaviour in the City Centre be approved and adopted subject to the following amendments:-*

*In the first sentence, after the words “our city” the insertion of the words “to continue” and the insertion of the following words at the end of the sentence “and that policing is responsive to their concerns.”*

*In the second sentence the deletion of the word “rising” and its replacement with the word “recent” and the deletion of the word “include” and its replacement with the word “included”.*

*In the third sentence after the word “We” the insertion of the words “welcome recent action and successes by the police, but”.*

*In the first bullet point following this sentence the deletion of the current wording and its replacement with the following words “To review and publish the latest evidence of the extent, nature and drivers of ASB, as well as the extent of public willingness to report incidents, to inform and develop a new Anti-Social Behaviour Plan. ”*

*In the second bullet point following this sentence the deletion of the word “lead” and its replacement with the word “seek”.*

Councillor Nissen indicated that the main amendment was accepted and the motion was deemed amended accordingly. The revised wording of the motion was as follows:-

*If our city is to continue to thrive, residents and visitors must feel safe and that policing is responsive to their concerns.*

*This Council notes the recent incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the historic city centre and surrounding neighbourhoods, which included:*

- damage to property;*
- harassment and abuse of staff and customers in the retail and hospitality sectors;*
- thefts from shops which harm businesses and which can heighten vulnerability experienced by retail staff and customers.*

*We welcome recent action and successes by the police, but call on the City Council and local Community Safety Partnership:*

- to review and publish the latest evidence of the extent, nature and drivers of ASB, as well as the extent of public willingness to report incidents, to inform and develop a new Anti-Social Behaviour Plan;*
- to seek a new collaboration with Essex Youth Services to develop and resource a new Youth Outreach Strategy to engage more effectively with those young people currently involved in ASB;*
- to bring together adult social care, health and substance misuse services to map efforts to address the causes of ASB*
- to work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to review policing resource for Colchester.*

On being put to the vote, the motion was approved and adopted (UNANIMOUS).

## **626 The Impact of Pylons on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

**Councillor Davidson (in respect of land he owned being on the route proposed by National Grid for the pylons) declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule (5) and left the meeting during its consideration and determination.**

It was proposed by Councillor Laws that:-

*This Council notes:*

- 1. The pride, affection and enjoyment with which residents and visitors have towards our local beauty spots and their tranquillity.*
- 2. National Grid are seeking to transport electricity across East Anglia via pylons which would have a dramatic impact on our residents, especially those living in Langham,*

*Boxted, Fordham, Great Horkesley, Little Horkesley, West Bergholt, Aldham, Marks Tey and beyond.*

*3. Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex have some of the most beautiful landscapes in the UK, immortalised by painters such as John Constable RA, as such these 50 metre high pylons are incompatible with these landscapes and challenge our revered 'big skies'.*

*4. The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which is a protected landscape, has been singled out as an area for power cables to be laid underground but this is only being considered on the basis of the defined area of the AONB.*

*Topographical considerations close to the AONB appear not to have been considered and you will be able to see these pylons from within the AONB.*

*Furthermore, the setting of the AONB will be compromised with the 'sealing-end compounds' (electrical sub-stations) as well as the installation of inspection pits.*

*5. The construction of the pylons and associated hardware will have a detrimental impact on our overburdened rural road infrastructure; including lanes with damage to verges likely where there are often no passing places.*

*6. Further negative consequences during the construction of these pylons could include damage to various habitats of wildlife including: trees, biodiversity, plant-life as well as also negatively impacting on regional tourist attractions and archaeology.*

*7. Current rules stipulate local Planning Authorities determine if onshore wind turbines are permissible.*

*This Council informs Cabinet of its opinion that:*

*1. Robust representations should be made, during and outside of consultation periods, to the government decision makers to oppose new pylons blighting our beautiful countryside.*

*2. Collaborative working with other local authorities and MPs should take place to support calls for an offshore grid, including for the North Falls and Five Estuaries wind farms; in order to speed up delivery of green energy, cut its cost and protect the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and surrounding countryside.*

*3. Any attempt to overrule local Planning Authority decision making regarding onshore wind turbines, which would also blight our beautiful countryside, should be resisted.*

Councillor Pearson proposed the following main amendment.

*That the motion on the Impact of Pylons on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty be approved and adopted subject to the following amendments:-*

*In the section informing Cabinet of Council's view:-*

*In paragraph 1, the deletion of the words "government decision makers" and their replacement with words "Government, given they have set the framework for these national planning issues," and the insertion of the following words at the end of the sentence "and to look again at underground and offshore options and their relative and*

*financial and environmental impacts”.*

*The deletion of paragraph 3.*

Councillor Laws indicated that the main amendment was not accepted. On being put to the vote the main amendment was approved (TWENTY FIVE voted FOR, SEVENTEEN voted AGAINST and TWO ABSTAINED from voting) and the motion was deemed amended accordingly. The revised wording of the motion was as follows:-

*This Council notes:*

- 1. The pride, affection and enjoyment with which residents and visitors have towards our local beauty spots and their tranquility.*
- 2. National Grid are seeking to transport electricity across East Anglia via pylons which would have a dramatic impact on our residents, especially those living in Langham, Boxted, Fordham, Great Horkesley, Little Horkesley, West Bergholt, Aldham, Marks Tey and beyond.*
- 3. Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex have some of the most beautiful landscapes in the UK, immortalised by painters such as John Constable RA, as such these 50 metre high pylons are incompatible with these landscapes and challenge our revered ‘big skies’.*
- 4. The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which is a protected landscape, has been singled out as an area for power cables to be laid underground but this is only being considered on the basis of the defined area of the AONB. Topographical considerations close to the AONB appear not to have been considered and you will be able to see these pylons from within the AONB. Furthermore, the setting of the AONB will be compromised with the ‘sealing-end compounds’ (electrical sub-stations) as well as the installation of inspection pits.*
- 5. The construction of the pylons and associated hardware will have a detrimental impact on our overburdened rural road infrastructure; including lanes with damage to verges likely where there are often no passing places.*
- 6. Further negative consequences during the construction of these pylons could include damage to various habitats of wildlife including: trees, biodiversity, plant-life as well as also negatively impacting on regional tourist attractions and archaeology.*
- 7. Current rules stipulate local Planning Authorities determine if onshore wind turbines are permissible.*

*This Council informs Cabinet of its opinion that:*

- 1. Robust representations should be made, during and outside of consultation periods, to the Government, given they have set the framework for these national planning issues, to oppose new pylons blighting our beautiful countryside and to look again at underground and offshore options and their relative and financial and environmental impacts.*
- 2. Collaborative working with other local authorities and MPs should take place to support calls for an offshore grid, including for the North Falls and Five Estuaries wind farms; in order to speed up delivery of green energy, cut its cost and protect the Dedham*



*Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and surrounding countryside.*

On being put to the vote, the motion was approved and adopted (UNANIMOUS).

**627 Questions to Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 10**

Questioner	Subject	Response
Pre-notified questions		
Councillor Dundas	<p>We are all aware of the current anti-social behaviour issues in parts of our city, but it must be emphasised that this is not just in the City Centre but also occurs in our villages and rural areas as the incident in Tiptree on July 11 sadly demonstrates.</p> <p>The City Centre has a very impressive, state-of-the-art digital CCTV system which is monitored 24/7. However, as far as I am aware this system covers few, if any, areas outside of the City Centre.</p> <p>Tiptree Parish Council also have a modern CCTV system but due to resources this cannot be monitored 24/7. Would the Portfolio Holder be willing to ascertain the technical feasibility of linking Tiptree's and other systems which may exist into the centrally monitored City system?</p>	<p>Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing, responded on behalf of Councillor Sommers, Portfolio Holder for Communities. Colchester Amphora were commissioned under the Management Agreement between Colchester City Council (CCC) and CCHL to operate the City Centre CCTV system on a cost recovery basis funded through the Management Fee. The monitoring suite based in the Town Hall also managed all out of hours calls for CCC and CBH, as well as Helpline, Police Radio, Pub watch etc. There were several other CCTV systems in wards, CCC and CBH buildings, Neighbourhood Teams, body warn cameras that do not sit within CCHL's management.</p> <p>With support from CCC and section 106 contributions Amphora designed and delivered the digital upgrade of CCTV across the City Centre intensifying the coverage from circa 120 cameras to 350 cameras including connecting up</p>

	<p>Regardless of this, are there any plans in place to extend the current City Centre system to other our other urban centres such as Tiptree, Wivenhoe, Stanway, West Mersea etc.?</p> <p>There may be grants available to help fund expansion of the CCTV network and some parish/town councils may be prepared to contribute to the cost, but in order to do so, they would need to know if was technically feasible and what the cost was. Could a feasibility study be undertaken?</p>	<p>Leisure World and Colchester Sports Park to the monitoring suite. This digital system could accommodate additional cameras but this required not just capital costs upfront but additional ongoing revenue support.</p> <p>Amphora received requests for additional coverage on a regular basis and have met with CCC colleagues to propose a process for evaluation and sign off for these requests.</p> <p>There is also a need for an overall CCTV strategy from CCC in relation to CCTV:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For requestors to understand the rational for requesting additional cameras, you must demonstrate a justified need.</li><li>• Understand what the desired outcomes are i.e. cameras can detect and sometimes deter but require additional engagement especially from the Police to respond and support</li><li>• The privacy impacts to be considered and how residents are protected from unwarranted CCTV coverage</li><li>• The upfront and ongoing additional costs and how these are funded and if CCC want to invest in CCTV.</li></ul>
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		<p>In relation to Tiptree's request, Amphora had met with Ward Councillors and the Parish Clerk previously. One of the key issues is the need for the CCTV to be connected by dedicated fibre. This was critical to maintain security of the entire system that none of it operates over the internet. The costs of providing fibre to Tiptree and the ongoing costs were a barrier to this being discussed further.</p> <p>The feasibility study could be considered as part of the overall CCTV Strategy.</p>
<p>Councillor Laws</p>	<p>Could the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage please update Council on the Lion Walk Roman Mosaic project?</p>	<p>Councillor Burrows, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage, explained that the Council was keen to preserve, protect and display its best heritage assets. The approach was to look at the costs and practicalities of displaying the mosaic. She would forward the report from the recent dig which had three main focuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify moisture content in the surrounding soil;</li> <li>To identify the full extent of the surviving mosaic;</li> <li>To identify buried services that may impact on the mosaic and any display.</li> </ul> <p>If the mosaic was to be displayed through a glazed pavement there</p>

		<p>were concerns that moisture in the soil could cause damage to the mosaic through condensation. There could also be biological growth which would require regular maintenance of the display. The dig had revealed a high voltage cable lying over the most decorative part of the mosaic. There was some question about the quality of the mosaic in the areas not covered by the cable. The diversion work would have to be done by UK Power Networks at a significant cost, leading to a significant overspend on the budget. It would not be safe to display with the cable remaining in situ.</p> <p>An alternative, more cost effective option would be to display another mosaic behind glass, such as the Red Lion mosaic on display in the Castle. Discussion on the best course of action continued and she would keep members informed.</p>
<p>Councillor Dundas</p>	<p>I am sure the Portfolio Holder is aware of the long history of the Northern Sports Park and the Mill Road development of more than 300 homes, the District Heat Network, retirement village and a hospital/medical facility.</p> <p>The original scheme required a new home for the Colchester Rugby Club before they could vacate the Mill Road site and make it available for development. To that end, CCC constructed the Northern Sports Park using a mixture of loans, Homes England Grant and S106 money with the</p>	<p>Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, emphasised that the Colchester Northern Gateway Sports Park was an excellent facility which should be promoted and publicised more.</p> <p>The expert view was that the markets were currently “messy” and were cooling down as a consequence of the mini budget and inflation. As much as the administration wished to see the</p>

	<p>plan that such loans would eventually be paid off by the proceeds from developing the Mill Road site.</p> <p>The originally anticipated date the sale of houses would begin paying off those loans was July 2022, it is now July 2023 and no construction is taking place.</p> <p>Could the Portfolio Holder please confirm whether and when the money spent on the sports park will be recovered from the sale of Mill Road Housing land, as originally planned and that as a result any money we are borrowing at high interest rates will be paid off and not eat into our scarce general fund?</p>	<p>development of the Mill Road site, there were several issues. As a consequence of the economic conditions, there was less investment and the developer of the health care site was not progressing as quickly as planned. This was having an impact on securing the highways permissions that were needed for the site.</p> <p>Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd were working hard to progress matters and the position was being reviewed. This was in line with the review of the capital programme, the work being undertaken by CIPFA and Link, who were the Council's investment advisers.</p> <p>In terms of Treasury Management, there was not a specific loan that was taken out for the development of the sports park. It was funded through internal borrowing and some longer term borrowing. Therefore the Council was not carrying direct costs of the Sport Park but it could be argued that the Council was losing out on some of the borrowing and investment it could have made. There would be some shortfalls because of the delay so it was hoped that development would pick up when the markets began to recover. Capital receipts would still be received in the long term to help pay for the project.</p>
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<p>Cllr Sunnucks</p>	<p>I am pleased the Council is the owner of a broadband network funded by DCMS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• and that the Colchester Fibre Ultrafast Broadband service is now live and available.</li> <li>• and that it offers excellent value for money to Colchester residents and businesses.</li> </ul> <p>Please could the Portfolio Holder confirm how many external resident and commercial subscribers there are and whether we are on budget? Are sufficient steps being taken to explain why residents should choose it over established brands like Virgin and BT? Please could he also confirm that all terms of the DCMS grant agreement are being complied with, especially those relating to the commercialisation of the network?</p>	<p>Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, explained that the terms of the DCMS agreement were being complied with and the Council reported to the DCMS quarterly. It was always the intention that the project would develop and lead into competition. However, the Council had consulted with specialist telecommunications lawyers and consultants to ensure compliance with the regulatory framework.</p> <p>Information about number of subscribers would be provided separately as for reasons of commercial confidentiality. it would not be appropriate to disclose these in a public meeting. The network had now extended to Shrub End and Wivenhoe. The Year 1 targets for residential customers had been exceeded and there was a significant base of business interest. The full network of Council companies and buildings were also served by the network and it was being rolled out into the sheltered housing estates. Whilst there had been difficulties in the early years, a good income was now being generated, and it needed further promotion. It was hoped to extend the network to rural areas but external partners would be required for this.</p>

		<p>There had no challenge from the major providers to any of the schemes established through the DCMS, and therefore it was not expected that this scheme would be challenged.</p>
<p>Oral Questions</p>		
<p>Councillor Rippingale</p>	<p>Could the Portfolio Holder for Housing clarify the reasons for the rise in families in temporary accommodation and outline the actions the Council is taking to remedy the situation, given the demand is likely to increase with the eviction of the refugee families from the Marks Tey Hotel on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August?</p>	<p>Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing explained that there were currently 296 families in temporary accommodation, 62 families were in bed and breakfast accommodation, of which 20 were housed outside of the city.</p> <p>Colchester was facing a housing crisis, as were many authorities. The causes of this included the freezing of the local housing allowance for the last four years, whilst rents increased significantly. This meant families on housing benefit were unable to pay their rent and were therefore facing eviction. Some landlords were refusing to let to tenants on any form of benefit, including working family credit. High interest rates were pushing mortgages up which was pricing first time buyers out of the market. This increased demand in the rental market which pushed rents up. As a consequence of these factors more people were becoming homeless. There was also a shortfall in the amount of social housing being built as a result of government policies.</p>

		<p>Colchester always welcomed refugees. Thirty one Afghan families who provided service to the country were due to be evicted on 4 August. Eleven had so far found alternative accommodation. The government had provided further help but there remained a huge shortfall, especially when the needs of Ukrainian refugees were also taken into account.</p> <p>Members should attend the briefing on housing issues on 24 July.</p>
Councillor Willetts	<p>Would the Portfolio Holder for Resources give an assurance that the Council would not bank with any bank that was a member of a group that discriminated against its customers by closing their account by reason of their race, religion, colour, political persuasion, sexual orientation or disability.</p>	<p>Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, explained that Full Council agreed the Treasury Management rules which set out the framework for which banks the Council used.</p>
Councillor Willetts	<p>Within his ward there was a development of 43 homes that had originally all been Council housing, but of which only nine were now in Council ownership. This fronted onto an unadopted lane, which the Council had maintained when the development was mainly Council owned. The Council was now increasingly reluctant to maintain the lane given the decline in Council ownership, which penalised those who were still Council tenants. Could the</p>	<p>Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing, explained that this was indicative of issues that were arising out of the right to buy. He was not aware of any particular policy that covered this particular situation but he would look into it.</p>



	<p>Portfolio Holder for Housing confirm whether there was a policy covering this situation and could this be communicated to the tenants involved?</p>	
<p>Councillor Mannion</p>	<p>Whilst the impact the current situation has on the City's finances and in particular the lower frequency of public open space grass cutting was appreciated, could the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste assure Tiptree residents that despite this the contractor will be strongly reminded that grass verges must also be cut as part of regular cutting programme for the village thus maintaining pride in the community.</p>	<p>Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, explained that the frequency of grass cutting had been reduced. Essex County Council provided funding for two cuts per year on all verges they owned but had provided no uplift to this for a significant period. All verges were cut every month between April and September/October and on land the Council owned, eight cuts were undertaken. This service should be provided across the whole city. It was understood that there were some issues that had been picked up with the contractor. Updated information on cutting schedules was now available on the Council's website.</p>
<p>Councillor Scordis</p>	<p>Could the Leader of the Council explain what action the Council was taking to alleviate damage caused by flooding on Haven Road.</p>	<p>Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that he had little to add to the last meeting of the Haven Road Taskforce which Councillor Scordis had attended. He would send him the background briefing papers he had received before the meeting. Responsibility lay across a number of organisations including Essex County Council, which was the responsible authority for flooding. The situation was complex and a sound technical solution had not yet been found. It was clear from the last Taskforce meeting that</p>

		<p>understanding of the problem was growing and more work was to be done. The Council's role was to convene partners and to make a contribution, and some funding from section 106 had been identified, but prime responsibility lay with partners. He would continue to press for progress on technical solutions. The Council was taking full responsibility for the nearby works on Fieldgate Quay.</p>
Councillor Dundas	Should further work be done to promote the Council's Fibre Ultrafast Broadband network?	Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, explained that it was promoted where the network was available.
Councillor Lissimore	Following an incident on the green off Van Dyke Road, had the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste taken into consideration the fire risk arising from the long grass and would he include this in his conversations with Idverde?	Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, explained that health and safety was taken very seriously but prime responsibility lay with the contractor. He would look into the incident if further details were provided.
Councillor Harris	Following incidents of blocked waste chutes in older style flats in Berechurch, could a review of these flats be undertaken with a view to providing bins and better recycling infrastructure?	Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing, explained that this was an area of concern that would be picked up in the revised Waste Strategy.
Councillor Smalls	Following a recent fire in a black bag, almost certainly caused by a battery, was there more that could be done to encourage residents to dispose of batteries correctly?	Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, stressed that staff safety was paramount in any fire incident. The Council's procedures emphasised the need to retreat to safety and call the fire brigade in such circumstances, but operatives sometimes tackled small fires

		<p>themselves, which was indicative of their dedication.</p> <p>The Council had run press and social media campaigns on the need to dispose of batteries correctly. Single use vapes, which contained batteries, were a particular risk. He undertook educational visits to schools and youth groups in which he emphasised the need to recycle batteries properly. Ultimately it was down to the personal responsibility of residents to ensure materials were disposed of safely.</p>
Councillor Goacher	<p>Could the Leader of the Council confirm whether there had been a reduction in patrols in Castle Park?</p>	<p>Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that he understood the arrangements had been changed and he had requested that the patrols be restored. He would look into this further and provide a response.</p>
Councillor Rowe	<p>It was understood that there a back office system that provided contractors with information on the areas they were required to be cut and the dates that this needed to be done. Could the Portfolio Holder Neighbourhood Services and Waste arrange for Councillors to be given access to this system so they could keep residents better informed?</p>	<p>Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, explained that the website was the key place for the dissemination of such information. This had recently been updated with the latest information. This did not contain exact dates as this was liable to change due to staffing or weather. There could be licensing issues that could prevent wider use of the system in the way that was suggested.</p>

**628 Updates to the Constitution**

**Councillor Warnes indicated that as Chair of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd he had sought advice from the Monitoring Officer as to whether he should declare an interest in this item. The Monitoring Officer had advised that as the report did not impact on the financial interest or wellbeing of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd it was not necessary for an interest to be declared. However he would not speak or vote on the item.**

*RESOLVED* that the recommended decisions in the Monitoring Officer's report be approved and adopted.

**629 Schedule of Portfolio Holder Decisions**

*RESOLVED* that the schedule of Portfolio Holder decisions covering the period 10 February 2023 – 7 July 2023 be noted.