



Policy Panel Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ**

Wednesday, 28 June 2023 at 18:00

The Policy Panel provides legislative, improvement and policy advice to Cabinet and Portfolio Holders on issues that may affect executive functions. The Panel considers issues at the request of Cabinet and Portfolio Holders and must seek approval from Cabinet on whether and how issues proactively identified by the Panel are examined. The Panel also considers initiatives for review from members of the public.

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 (the list of items to be discussed at a meeting), which is usually published five working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published. Dates of the meetings are available here:

<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/MeetingCalendar.aspx>.

Most meetings take place in public. This only changes when certain issues, for instance, commercially sensitive information or details concerning an individual are considered. At this point you will be told whether there are any issues to be discussed in private, if so, you will be asked to leave the meeting.

Have Your Say!

The Council welcomes contributions and representations from members of the public at most public meetings. If you would like to speak at a meeting and need to find out more, please refer to the Have Your Say! arrangements here:

<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/HaveYourSay.aspx>

Or, alternatively, email us at: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk

Audio Recording, Mobile phones and other devices

The Council records public meetings for live broadcast over the internet and the recordings are available to listen to afterwards on the Council's YouTube channel. Audio recording, photography and filming of meetings by members of the public is also welcomed. Phones, tablets, laptops, cameras and other devices can be used at all meetings of the Council so long as this doesn't cause a disturbance. It is not permitted to use voice or camera flash functions and devices must be set to silent. Councillors can use devices to receive messages, to access meeting papers and information via the internet. Looking at or posting on social media by Committee members is at the discretion of the Chairman / Mayor who may choose to require all devices to be switched off at any time.

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 the Library and Community Hub, Colchester Central Library, using the contact details below and we will try to provide a reading service, translation or other formats you may need.

Facilities

Toilets with lift access, if required, are on each floor of the Town Hall. A water dispenser is available on the first floor.

Evacuation Procedures

Evacuate the building using the nearest available exit. Make your way to the assembly area in the car park in St Runwald Street behind the Town Hall. Do not re-enter the building until the Town Hall staff advise you that it is safe to do so.

Library and Community Hub, Colchester Central Library, 21 Trinity Square,
Colchester, CO1 1JB

telephone (01206) 282222 or textphone 18001 followed by the full number you wish to call

Policy Panel – Terms of Reference

- (1) To consider strategies, policies and legislative changes identified by Cabinet that may require review and improvement and to seek Cabinet's agreement as to whether and how they should be examined.
- (2) To review issues at the request of a Portfolio Holder and to make recommendations back to the Portfolio Holder for decision.

COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Policy Panel
Wednesday, 28 June 2023 at 18:00

The Policy Panel Members are:

Councillor Jocelyn Law	Chairman
Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell	Deputy Chairman
Councillor Kevin Bentley	
Councillor Sue Lissimore	
Councillor Sam McCarthy	
Councillor Rhys Smithson	
Councillor Julie Young	

The Policy Panel Substitute Members are:

All members of the Council who are not members of the Panel.

AGENDA
THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING
(Part A - open to the public)

Please note that Agenda items 1 to 5 are normally dealt with briefly.

1 Welcome and Announcements

The Chairman will welcome members of the public and Councillors and remind everyone to use microphones at all times when they are speaking. The Chairman will also explain action in the event of an emergency, mobile phones switched to silent, audio-recording of the meeting. Councillors who are members of the committee will introduce themselves.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillors will be asked to say if there are any items on the agenda about which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest which would prevent them from participating in any discussion of the item or participating in any vote upon the item, or any other registerable interest or non-registerable interest.

3 Substitutions

Councillors will be asked to say if they are attending on behalf of a Committee member who is absent.

4 Urgent Items

The Chairman will announce if there is any item not on the published agenda which will be considered because it is urgent and will explain the reason for the urgency.

5 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Councillors will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meetings held on 1 March 2023 and 24 May 2023 are a correct record.

Policy Panel Minutes 1 March 2023

7 - 12

Policy Panel Minutes 24 May 2023

13 - 14

6 Have Your Say! (Hybrid Council meetings)

Members of the public may make representations to the meeting. This can be made either in person at the meeting or by joining the meeting remotely and addressing the Panel via Zoom. Each representation may be no longer than three minutes. Members of the public wishing to address the Panel remotely may register their wish to address the meeting by e-mailing democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk by 12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting date. In addition a written copy of the representation will need to be supplied for use in the event of unforeseen technical difficulties preventing participation at the meeting itself.

□

There is no requirement to pre register for those attending the meeting in person.

7 Work Programme 2023-24

15 - 16

This report sets out the dates of the Work Programme for 2023-2024 for the Policy Panel and gives the Panel an opportunity to consider what subjects for which it may wish to request Cabinet approval for the Panel to consider in the 2023-24 municipal year, and to formally make recommendations to put these to Cabinet for approval. Cabinet may also wish to consider what subjects it might want the Policy Panel to consider during 2023-24.

8 Exclusion of the Public (not Scrutiny or Executive)

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 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).

Part B
(not open to the public including the press)

POLICY PANEL

1 March 2023

- Attendees:** Councillors Coleman, Jowers, Law, Pearson (Chairing meeting), and Smithson.
- Substitutes:** Councillor Maclean for Councillor Bentley, Councillor McCarthy for Councillor Scott-Boutell.
- Also in attendance:** Councillor Cox, Councillor Fox, Councillor King

68. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes from the meeting held on 30 November 2022 and 11 January 2023 be confirmed as accurate records.

69. Have Your Say

Mr Steve Kelly addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to ask how the Council's current policies were being used to improve sustainability in health levels and ask why vitamin D was not being proactively distributed. Mr Kelly alleged that there were people injured by vaccines and who were being ignored and gave his view that a certain medication might help them. Mr Kelly praised the views of Andrew Wakefield [UK academic who was struck off the medical register in 2010]. Mr Kelly argued that the Council should be supportive of more initiatives and more constructive, especially regarding supporting immune systems.

The Chair emphasised that the Council was not a primary healthcare authority and stated his own view regarding vaccinations, which was shared by most doctors and differed from Mr Kelly's view.

70. City Status Update

Lucie Breadman, Strategic Director, gave a presentation on City Status and the Year of Celebration. A range of activities were planned and described, as well as a range of events to be run by the Council and others. Partners had been invited to participate in Council-run activities and events, and to hold their own across the area, including outside the city itself. The branding being used was displayed, and this formed part of the work with the Business Improvement District [BID] to promote Colchester's retail vision and recognition. City status was to be used to help market Colchester, including videos and methods to hit a range of demographics. Retail and the night-time economy were included in marketing efforts. It was confirmed that 'Enlightenment' would return to the Castle.

The bridge between work on the Year of Celebration and on setting a legacy was described, focussing on the Strategic Plan and Economic Strategy, which were both

almost ready for approval, alongside the Cultural Strategy unveiled in 2022.

Matthew Brown, Economic Regeneration Manager, explained that the Town Deal and Levelling Up funding totalled around £40m. Most funding was for the City centre, but £6m was allocated for the Heart of Greenstead project and £3m for a cycle link to that area. These were in their early stages and were expected to complete by March 2026. There was an emphasis on heritage for both funding sources. Extensive progress had been made on Jumbo. Led by the Essex Heritage Trust. Around £1.6m was allocated to refurbish and repurpose Jumbo to become part of the local economy.

Town Deal funding and £1.4m Lottery funding had been put towards creating a new community hub in Holy Trinity Church, the oldest building standing, Colchester's largest Saxon remains. The Church and its grounds would be accessible for public use. Levelling Up funding granted had an emphasis on heritage and improving access to it, totalling around £19.66m. This included improvements to the St Botolph's area (such as the southern Roman wall, the Priory and route from the railway station to the city centre, including better signage). An improved walking route was planned between Colchester Town Station and Firstsite, with steps and ramps at Britannia Car Park and at the Roman wall, to compliment the regeneration in the area. Better signage and access were proposed for the Roman Circus.

Councillor David King, Leader of the Council, expressed his hope that the presentation showed the tangible improvements proposed, including ways to help people use different travel options, including walking. The Council, Essex County Council [ECC] and partners worked together as one team to deliver improvements as part of an overall masterplan. The Council was providing officer time to the project for Jumbo and could offer financial capital, with £1.6m already secured, to give it the best prospects. The Leader stressed that much of the action and planning had cross-party support. The aim was to draw on others to see what more could be done, including university networks and other new cities' experiences. The vision extended to all parts of the City, including Northern Gateway, University, Stanway and Tollgate, and the rural parts of the Colchester area.

Councillor Pam Cox, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Heritage, outlined the aim to open up the East side of Colchester, improving access to cultural attractions. The work to build networks and seek extra investment was described. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged concerns as to whether enough was being done outside of the City for the 'Year of Celebration' and gave examples of activities and events, such as guided walks across the area, including Gosbecks Archaeological Park. The City Charter had been digitised for public access and 'Ride London' was now due to come to the area, drawing visitors.

Panel members praised and welcomed the plans to improve presentation and access to heritage assets in the City. The importance of the area's military heritage was underlined, including historic garrison buildings. The engineering history of Colchester was also emphasised. Much money was provided by the Paxman family towards the building of the Town Hall, but artifacts relating to the engineering history of the Paxmans firm were currently being stored outside of the area and were not on display. This led to a welcoming of giving credit and praise to local firms which contributed to investing in the betterment of the area.

Panel members requested that more information be made public regarding prioritisation of works and timescales set. A Panel member urged for the River Colne to be better used.

The Portfolio Holder was asked how aspirations would be measured and how these could translate into improving the way in which people and residents viewed the area. Recent consultation had garnered some responses which showed that it was sometimes difficult for residents to feel local pride. More detail was requested regarding promoting a compassionate city, as to how people feel and contribute to society. Young people were identified as being key, with the view given that the Council should want young people not to move away from the area. The Portfolio Holder explained that benchmarking of data was needed, and that an officer had been recruited to lead on youth involvement and collate data to shape future actions.

The Panel identified a range of key attractions, including the Zoo, University, football club, galleries, sports facilities museums, concerts, Priory and beaches.

Concern was raised that inflation meant that costs would quickly rise. The Portfolio Holder was asked what would be done to mitigate rising costs. Lucie Breadman, Strategic Director, explained that she was leading a capital review of financing, seeking to mitigate increased costs. The Council had what was needed, as Levelling Up funding bids included projected cost increases. A Panel member asked if revenue from Britannia car park would decrease if part of it was to be developed to ease passage from the railway station to City centre.

The Portfolio Holder was asked if fringe events could be held in town and parish halls and if events covering the whole area were considered, such as Colchester in Bloom. It was suggested that parish councils should be included, to identify sites of interest and opportunities. Blue Plaques could be included across the greater Colchester area. A suggestion was made to tie all of the different Christmas Fairs together, and for a Wilkin and Sons 'Colchester Jam' to be produced. Lucie Breadman, Strategic Director, stated that she chaired a forum for parish clerks, where updates and information were circulated regularly. The Strategic Director agreed that the Council needed to engage more with rural communities. A Panel member argued for the creation of a rural engagement strategy and appointment of a Councillor as a Rural Champion.

A Panel member requested that the spelling of 'Layer Marney' be correct in the plans and presentations. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that Layer Marney Tower was a partner in the Year of Celebration and was using the official branding. Talks were ongoing with the Zoo and Wilkin and Sons would be welcomed to be part of the celebrations. The Strategic Director confirmed that the Zoo and Wilkin and Sons had been invited to join the marketing group for the Year of Celebration.

The Leader wanted a free-flowing ongoing conversation to continue to shape actions and priorities. The Council did not have the resources to pursue all plans at the same time and the Leader agreed that a sequence of works was needed. The river had been discussed previously, but it had not been possible to take it further at that time. Better use of the river would be taken into new conversations.

The Leader argued that quality of life was key, and the Council should focus on influencing this. Colchester should be an aspirational city of the future, with a collective sense of place and way of measuring quality of life.

The Town Hall was discussed, and the Leader recognised the struggle to maintain the building, due to funding cuts enacted on local authorities. Major refurbishment and maintenance issues existed, and attempts were being renewed to improve its condition.

Simon Blaxill, Chair of the 'We are Colchester' Board, praised the work of Council officers to obtain the funding that had been won, giving the opportunity for action. The marketing efforts would link together events and activities across the area and the Chair of the 'We are Colchester' Board argued that private business investment was needed to get more investment in the area, and attract incoming new businesses. A Business Improvement District [BID] meeting had shown the difficulties in local recruitment, and one suggestion was for the holding of local employment fairs.

71. Grounds Maintenance Contract

Nick Christo, Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager, provided an update on the three-year extension to the existing contract, set in place to give the Council time to move to an in-house model. Positive steps had been made to rewild areas and end the use of glyphosate weedkillers. The restructured teams were explained, in preparation for the commencing of in-house operations. There would be a new management, with new 'Maintenance Technician' positions, to give more responsive repairs, more quickly and at a more cost-effective rate. The in-house Tree Team would be more proactive, building resilience and removing the need for contractors.

The current contractors continued to be monitored and engaged with. The Council did not seek to replace them 'like for like', but to set up the service to match new needs and requirements for works.

Panel members underlined the importance of green spaces to health and wellbeing, and the importance of making best use of such spaces. A Panel member posited that the reorganisation of roles would increase operational buy in, and asked for more information on the expected savings from changing the maintenance roles and the commercial offer from the Tree Team.

A Panel member noted that there had been an element of disconnect between councillors reporting issues and then receiving reports back on progress. The officers were asked whether any progress had been made on the new 'Responder' application. The Operations Manager explained that the application was now named 'Task Smart' and was partially live, with full functionality to come. Report processes would flow to operatives, direct work and then ensure reports went directly back to councillors. The Panel were informed of the Council's work with Community 360 to make better use of the potential for green spaces to improve residents' health and wellbeing.

The Operations Manager explained how the Maintenance Technicians would enable

reactive responses to issues and a reduction in the use of contractors. The Tree Team would have a modest income target, in addition to dealing with the Council's tree stock more effectively. Tree care would be more proactive, rather than reactive. When residents called regarding private property, the Council planned to trail the operation of a workable chargeable service.

A Panel member noted that idVerde, the current service provider, had done a good job, but also spoke positively about the past in-house service operated by the Council and asked why trees could not be planted along the High Street and for the Council to consider how it might need to maintain open spaces at Middlewick, should the site be developed in the future. Officers were also asked whether electric vehicles would be used by the in-house service and where the fleet would be housed.

The Operations Manager took questions on priorities and confirmed that key aims were still to reduce costs and increase flexibility. A Panel member suggested that an apprenticeship route should be incorporated in the service, and that parish council maintenance officers could be employed to do some works. The Operations Manager explained that the Council needed to be smart in allocating work and resources, so worked with town councils, parish councils and other partners for site management and maintenance. Others would not be asked to take on Council duties, but could help increase what the Council could do. An apprenticeship scheme had been factored into the planning, including the Maintenance Technician roles, and increasing in size over time. It was projected that there would be around a 25% uplift in service provision, based on the current contract.

A Panel member noted that Spring Lane was now being farmed, with rent coming to the Council and the land maintained by the farmer. This was a large space and would be difficult for the Council to enforce against antisocial behaviour which might occur there. The Operations Officer gave assurances that officers engaged with the site managers, via the stewardship agreement in place.

The Leader gave his support to apprenticeship, being a core tenet of the Council to encourage apprenticeships. The Leader highlighted the difficulty in getting approval from Essex Highways, but said that the Council was on the case. There was an arrangement with Essex Highways to plant trees on St Nicholas Square, as part of a plan for parklets to break up and improve the street scene.

72. Support for Small Businesses in & around Colchester

Karen Turnbull, Economic Strategy Specialist, introduced the report, which showed small businesses facing more challenges now than ever before. Many major challenges included Brexit, war in Ukraine, Covid restrictions, increased taxes and increased costs. Colbea and the Business Improvement District [BID] were a key part of the Council's partnership working, with priceless links and knowledge. The Economic Strategy Specialist described work with the SELEP [South East Local Enterprise Partnership] Growth Hub and the Federation of Small Businesses. Colbea support for startups included workspaces at two locations and encouraged churn, as companies increased in success, moved on and were replaced with new start up companies.

Six local authorities had joined together to pool discretionary funds regarding Covid and the Economic Strategy Specialist highlighted successful Colchester bids. Colchester's 'Ultra Ready' website was used to focus on inward investment opportunities and to help existing local businesses to find additional support. Some of the local engagement events and groups were described, and the Economic Strategy Specialist highlighted the statistics regarding interventions by Colbea. The Council was also working with the University of Essex's Innovation Centre, with the University investing £12m and working to help support and connect technology companies.

Councillor Adam Fox, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation, described the support being provided by the Council and its partners. His time spent on the North Essex Economic Board had shown that Colchester did more than some other local authorities, and positive effects could be seen from this.

The Panel discussed the need to attract new businesses and investment to the area, as well as some of the challenges which made this more difficult. Problems mentioned including past difficulties in getting planning permissions, and traffic management. A Panel member urged for the City to focus on the creation of support service jobs and not impede employers, which could take advantage of good links to London, airports and the coastal ports. Another Panel member welcomed the use of co-working spaces, stating that revenue increased, on average, by around 10% for small businesses which utilised co-working and offering his experience to help those operating in such a way. A suggestion was made that the Council should do more with the military to help veterans start new careers or work for local firms. The Leader confirmed that he was the Council's Armed Forces Champion, and that he liaised regularly with the Garrison Commander.

The Economic Strategy Specialist was asked whether Colchester had a better success rate for small businesses than its neighbouring areas, and whether there were any statistics regarding the types of businesses being set up, and further examples of outcomes from the support given. It was agreed that more data could be provided by the Specialist following the meeting. The Economic Strategy Specialist emphasised the value of the Langham Lodge Park facility and the investment into it, helping start-up businesses to succeed. At the University, students were 'hot-housed' in Studio X, and a business innovation facility was used to help students to progress. Veterans were encouraged to seek support from Colbea for any business start up ideas. There were no statistics relating to comparisons with neighbouring areas, but information could be given on the types of businesses being started locally.

POLICY PANEL
24 May 2023

Attendees: Councillors Bentley, Law, Lissimore, McCarthy, Scott-Boutell, Smithson and J. Young.

Substitutes: None.

Also in attendance:

73. Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Jocelyn Law be appointed Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the municipal year.

74. Appointment of Deputy Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the municipal year.



Policy Panel

Item
7

28 June 2023

Report of	Group Manager – Neighbourhood Services	Author	Owen Howell ☎ 282518
Title	Work Programme 2023-24		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the dates of the Work Programme for 2023-2024 for the Policy Panel and gives the Panel an opportunity to consider what subjects for which it may wish to request Cabinet approval for the Panel to consider in the 2023-24 municipal year, and to formally make recommendations to put these to Cabinet for approval. Cabinet may also wish to consider what subjects it might want the Policy Panel to consider during 2023-24.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the dates of the Panel's Work Programme for 2023-2024 as set out below and to consider if it wishes to request Cabinet approval for work items to be added.

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 Panel's Work Programme will evolve as the municipal year progresses. Items can be added to the Work Programme by request of Portfolio Holders and/or Cabinet requesting policies, strategies or other issues to be reviewed.

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 City as set out under the themes of:

- Respond to the climate emergency;
- Deliver modern services for a modern city;
- Improve health, wellbeing and happiness;
- Deliver homes for those most in need;
- Grow our economy so everyone benefits;
- Celebrate our City, heritage and culture.

Policy Panel Work Programme 2022-23

28 June 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Programme 2023-24
2 August 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Programme 2023-24
27 September 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universal Credit/Financial Inequality• Work Programme 2023-24
29 November 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Programme 2023-24
10 January 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Programme 2023-24
6 March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•

Items which need to be scheduled for 2023-24

Potential update on Voter ID arrangements, depending on whether the Panel membership for 2023-24 wishes to receive this [Item requested by Panel in 2022-23].