

Policy Review and Development Panel

Grand Jury Room, Town Hall
10 March 2014 at 6.00pm

The Policy Review Panel deals with reviewing policies and issues at the request of the Cabinet or Portfolio Holder, or pro-actively identifying issues that may require review; dealing with those issues either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups, monitoring progress of these Groups and assessing their final reports.

Terms of Reference

Policy Review and Development Panel

- To review strategies and policies at the request of the Cabinet either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups, and to make recommendations back to Cabinet for decision.
- To review issues at the request of a Portfolio Holder either directly or by establishing Task and Finish Groups and to make recommendations back to the Portfolio Holder for decision.
- To monitor progress of Task and Finish Groups and assess their final reports prior to their submission to either the Cabinet or the Portfolio Holder.
- To proactively identify issues that may require review and improvement and to seek Cabinet's agreement as to whether and how they should be examined.

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
10 March 2014 at 6:00pm**

Members

Chairman : Councillor Julie Young.
Deputy Chairman : Councillor Mark Cory.
Councillors Mark Cable, Nigel Chapman, Barrie Cook,
John Elliott, Colin Mudie and Lesley Scott-Boutell.

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

Agenda - Part A

(open to the public including the media)

Members of the public may wish to note that Agenda items 1 to 6 are normally brief and the last Agenda Item is a standard one for which there may be no business to consider.

	Pages
1. Welcome and Announcements	1
(a) The Chairman to welcome members of the public and Councillors and to remind all speakers of the requirement for microphones to be used at all times.	
(b) At the Chairman's discretion, to announce information on:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• action in the event of an emergency;• mobile phones switched to silent;• the audio-recording of meetings;• location of toilets;• introduction of members of the meeting.	
2. Substitutions	
Members may arrange for a substitute councillor to attend a meeting on their behalf, subject to prior notice being given. The attendance of substitute councillors must be recorded.	
3. Urgent Items	
To announce any items not on the agenda which the Chairman has agreed to consider because they are urgent and to give reasons for the urgency.	
4. Declarations of Interest	

The Chairman to invite Councillors to declare individually any interests they may have in the items on the agenda. Councillors should consult Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 for full guidance on the registration and declaration of interests. However Councillors may wish to note the following:-

- Where a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest, other pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest in any business of the authority and he/she is present at a meeting of the authority at which the business is considered, the Councillor must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest, whether or not such interest is registered on his/her register of Interests or if he/she has made a pending notification.
- If a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at a meeting, he/she must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter at the meeting. The Councillor must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held unless he/she has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.
- Where a Councillor has another pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at a meeting and where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgment of the public interest, the Councillor must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held unless he/she has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.
- Failure to comply with the arrangements regarding disclosable pecuniary interests without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence, with a penalty of up to £5,000 and disqualification from office for up to 5 years.

5. Have Your Say!

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

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

6. Minutes

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2014

7. The Impact Of Welfare Reform on Housing and Homelessness **9 - 14**

See joint report by the Head of Commercial Services and the Head of Customer Services

The following guests have also agreed to come along to help the Panel in their discussions:

- Andy Smith, Colne Housing Society Ltd
- Reverend Andrew Fordyce, Vicar of St Margaret's Church Berechurch
- Mr and Mrs Simon Lasky, CAP money

8. Waste Task and Finish Group // Update **15 - 22**

See report by the Head of Operational Services

9. Work Programme 2013-14 **23 - 25**

See report by the Assistant Chief Executive

10. Exclusion of the public

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

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

You have the right to attend all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Cabinet. You also have the right to see the agenda, which is usually published 5 working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published. Dates of the meetings are available at www.colchester.gov.uk or from Democratic Services. Occasionally meetings will need to discuss issues in private. This can only happen on a limited range of issues, which are set by law. When a committee does so, you will be asked to leave the meeting.

Have Your Say!

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

Audio Recording, Filming, Mobile phones and other devices

The Council audio records all its public meetings and makes the recordings available on the Council's website. Audio recording, photography and filming of meetings by members of the public is also permitted. The discreet use of phones, tablets, laptops and other such devices is permitted at all meetings of the Council, with the exception of Committee members at all meetings of the Planning Committee, Licensing Committee, Licensing Sub-Committee and Governance Committee. It is not permitted to use voice or camera flash functionality and devices must be kept on silent mode. Where permitted, Councillors' use of devices is limited to receiving messages and accessing papers and information via the internet. Viewing or participation in social media is at the discretion of the Chairman / Mayor presiding at the meeting 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 use one of the contact details at the bottom of this page and we will try to provide a reading service, translation or other formats you may need.

Facilities

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

Evacuation Procedures

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

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

13 JANUARY 2014

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

Also in Attendance :- Councillor Annie Feltham
Councillor Gerard Oxford
Councillor Dennis Willetts

23. Minutes

24. Invited Guests

The Chairman welcomed three guests who had been invited to the meeting in order to broaden the Panel's discussion on Zone Working:

- Inspector Barry Atkinson, Essex Police
- Father Richard Tilbrook, St Barnabus Church, Old Heath
- Liz Brightwell, Teacher at the Ryes College and Community, Aldham

25. Zone Working

Nick Chilvers addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(2) asking a number of questions including:

- What is the current management structure for Zone Working and does the recent merging of services with the parks team lead to potential complications?
- Who determines the priorities for the service, bearing in mind the current contributions made to community activities and the need for enforcement and control?
- Describe the practical benefits for residents and the authority since the arrangement was set up?
- What are the trends and changes in workload and how do they think this will change as the Borough expands?
- What demands are the new housing developments having on the teams and do they differ to covering established areas?
- Can assurances be given that the resources within the teams will continue at the current level, given the numerous calls on the team's time?

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Community Services inviting the Panel to consider the success of the Zone Working principles which had been developed by the Council and to make relevant recommendations to Cabinet on the future shape of the Team.

Cassandra Clements, Zones Group Manager, explained that the new system of Zone working had been introduced in 2011 following the Street Services Fundamental Service Review (FSR). This was followed by an organisational structure change within the Universal Customer Contact FSR which delivered Community Services, and in turn altered the operational structure for Zones, Parks and Recreation and Community Initiatives. The borough was currently apportioned across seven Zones and four Parks Areas which together provided 66 full time equivalent staff with net budget expenditure of £1.7m. The zone operatives, zone wardens and Managers carried out a range of activities across some key priority areas including, enforcement, education, cleanliness, open spaces, health and wellbeing, social inclusion, capacity building and grounds maintenance. Cassandra explained that, between April and September, the highest volumes of work were in the following categories:

- Litter picking 1,828 tasks
- Fly tipping 1,473 tasks
- Maintenance tasks 965 tasks
- Community Activities 760 tasks
- Recycling Container Delivery 753 tasks

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

Inspector Barry Atkinson explained the benefits of partnership working between the Zone Teams and the local police. He was sure that crime and the fear of crime had been reduced as a result of the numerous examples of joint working between the Council and the Police, including Neighbourhood Action Panels, Community Days of Action, the Christmas Cracker Operation and the recent operation to jointly patrol firstsite and the St Botolph's area.

Father Richard Tilbrook explained that he had worked with the Zone Wardens since they had first been introduced in Old Heath. Originally the wardens had been issued with high visibility uniforms which meant that the contributions within communities were given a high profile. The wardens had dealt with community problems on the street and often generated schemes for action themselves. Since the introduction of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) the work of the Zone Wardens had changed and there has been some confusion over priorities

Liz Brightwell, Teacher at the Ryes College and Community, Aldham explained that she worked at a residential school for teenagers with challenging behaviour where the emphasis was on providing an education to give the pupils life skills to enable them to cope with the demands of independent living. She had contacted the Council for assistance with community activities for some of the pupils and had been very pleasantly surprised that the zone wardens were prepared to work with the pupils litter picking in the local area. She explained that two pupils had recently attended an older persons Christmas party with the wardens and were benefitting from an ongoing relationship with two wardens who had demonstrated that they were willing to spend time with them.

Councillor Willetts attended and with the consent of the Chairman addressed the Panel.

He recollected his first encounter with the Zone Team in his ward two years ago and was interested in how the Zone Teams could be improved to become a more cost effective service. He was aware that the Teams had a budget of £1.7 million and was interested to learn whether there were opportunities to outsource parts of the Team's activities or whether it was possible to increase income from the Team. He speculated whether it was possible to extend the areas of influence for the Zone Team and whether there could be more involvement of the community in service provision.

Councillor G Oxford attended and with the consent of the Chairman addressed the Panel. He indicated that he would have been interested to learn the views of a representative from one of the larger wards in the Borough as he was of the view that Highwoods ward was desperately short of adequate resources from the Zone Team. The make-up of the Team for the Highwoods area had been subject to frequent changes which had meant it had been difficult to build working relationships.

Particular discussion from the Panel members was in relation to:

- Councillor Cable - the value of the community activity in relation to vulnerable people undertaken in comparison to the core functions of the team, the need for clarity around what areas of work are given priority and what resources are available to enable diversification;
- Councillor Young – whether there was any interaction with the Essex County Council Highway Ranger teams;
- Councillor Scott-Boutell – the problem associated with poorly timed weed spraying schedules which were ineffective if they occurred at periods of anticipated rainfall and information on the schedules for the sweeping of wards;
- Councillor Cory – the need for the relationships between the Zone Teams and Essex County Council colleagues to continue to improve, the need for the Zone Teams to be clearly visible by the people in the communities in which they work, an acknowledgement of the importance of enforcement activity but the need for this to be combined with encouragement and education so that relationships within communities is seen as a positive one and the potential to expand on the Junior Warden schemes which had been supported by a number of Councillors by means of their Locality Budget funds;
- Councillor Cook – acknowledged the potential for other areas of work to be explored but his preference was for the Teams to consolidate the workload they currently undertook to very positive benefit within many communities;
- Councillor Chapman – considered the service had developed very well, was interested to learn how decisions were made as to which activities were undertaken and which were not, how many team members were authorised to issue fixed penalty notices, the increasing lack of effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Action Panel (NAP) arrangements and whether the Colchester Borough Homes Housing Officer regular four weekly reporting regime within the wards could be used proactively to encourage people to engage with the NAPs;
- Councillor Mudie – whether parking on grass verges was an offence which could be enforced;
- Councillor Elliott – problem of fly tipping which seemed to be particularly difficult to address in the Tiptree area along with hedge trimming to prevent overhanging across roads.

In response to questions raised, the following information was provided:

- Savings targets of £150,000 had been identified for the service and this had already been achieved by doing more for less cost. There were opportunities to promote additional income in terms of the joining together of the Zones and Parks Teams and it was hoped that savings would be delivered from a new litter picking contract which would reduce duplication of service delivery;
- There had been operational needs to change staff in the Highwoods Team, whilst another member of staff had requested a change of location. Resources across the Borough had been looked at and it was likely that it would be possible to deliver changes to the distribution of Team members from an over provision elsewhere;
- Where agency responsibility for work is difficult to identify the teams will assist by working with and/or chasing partner organisations to ensure work is concluded satisfactorily for communities;
- The priorities for the teams lay with street cleaning, enforcement and enabling activities which have a positive impact on communities rather than working with vulnerable communities;
- In terms of capacity, the team's work commitments were currently the equivalent of 2.7 persons under resourced
- Experience had tended to show that the Essex County Council Highway Rangers did not have the resources to deal with issues which had a significant impact;
- The Zone Team's clothing had been introduced corporately in a drive to bring a common theme across the various Council uniforms;
- It was anticipated that statistics on the issue of enforcement notices would be available on the Council's website shortly and these could be supplied to councillors for their wards upon request;
- The building of relationships within communities and the balance between enforcement activities and educational ones was down to the skills of each individual warden;
- Junior Warden schemes had been operated in a number of schools and the Team was now working with Thurstable School, Tiptree to increase the number of students who had benefitted from the activity, there had also been placements for work experience for the unemployed and the opportunity to consider apprenticeship schemes had been investigated but this had proved difficult to achieve;
- The majority of decisions not to undertake activity were in relation to community events which were now activities which were supported within communities rather than delivered;
- The operational control of the Teams was undertaken by Cas as the Team Manager but strategic issues were referred to the Head of Service and the Portfolio Holder for determination;
- The need to change the way the NAPs were operating was acknowledged along with the opportunity for the NAP regime to be used to communicate and co-ordinate activity within communities;
- The service currently had 17 wardens and 7 managers who were all authorised to issue the eight different categories of notices for the control of activities such as

- fly tipping, littering, dog fouling and graffiti;
- Sweeping was undertaken between February and October each year with one vehicle dedicated to the town centre and six others for the rest of the Borough. The vehicles spent a week in each Zone area with the wardens determining the areas to be prioritised so that hotspots or requests could be responded to proactively. It was intended to publish the routes online which would illustrate the expectation that all roads would be subject to a sweep at least once within a six week cycle;
 - Car parking on grass verges did not fall within the responsibility of the Council as it was now an matter for the North Essex Parking Partnership;
 - Tiptree had one of the highest incidences of fly tipping in the Borough, all incidences were investigated in order to find evidence and intelligence about who had left the material but often all that could be done was to arrange for clearance. It was no longer possible to utilise CCTV to assist in gathering evidence so it was now necessary to rely on reports from within communities themselves.

In order to assist plans for the future of the services, the Chairman invited each member of the Panel to identify the one priority they considered to be the most important for Zone Working. These were:

Councillor Elliott – Enforcement action to address problems of fly tipping;

Councillor Cable – more flexibility to tackle problems of overgrowth;

Councillor Chapman – improvements to the environment and partnership work with Parish Councils on the larger issues;

Councillor Cook – continue with current practices;

Councillor Scott-Boutell – litter picking and improved capacity for youth activities across the Borough;

Councillor Cory – increased enforcement activity and an expansion of the service through income generated from partnership working;

Councillor Young – to continue the current flexibility of service delivery.

In concluding the discussion, the Chairman also invited Nick Chilvers and Councillor Feltham to share their thoughts on the outcomes of the discussion. Mr Chilvers referred to the fact that the Zone Working Team were very well thought of by the Councillors on the Panel, that the teams were considered to be quick and responsive and it was likely that the work of the NAPs could be undertaken by the Zone Teams and the Community Police Officers. Nevertheless, he felt he was still unclear as to where responsibilities for future decision making lay within the Teams and at a strategic level, that the workload priorities for the teams required clarification and new challenges presented by increased development at the Garrison and off Turner Road needed to be planned.

Councillor Feltham, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Communities, addressed the Panel explaining that the Zone Teams did cut across the whole of the organisation and it was therefore not surprising that it impacted across three portfolio responsibilities.

She referred to the concept of communities and community working and welcomed the enabling and encouraging attitude of the Teams to this element of their work. She acknowledged that there were many views on what service the Teams should be providing and this would have an impact on whether they were viewed as doing their job well or not. She referred to the challenges ahead due to cost pressures for all Councils and the need for future work planning to take account of the limited resources likely to be available. This was particularly difficult when trying to measure the value of and identify priorities for a qualitative service.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) Inspector Barry Atkinson, Reverend Richard Tilbrook and Liz Brightwell be thanked for their valuable contributions to the meeting.
- (ii) Cas Clements be asked to contact Nick Chilvers direct to respond to those matters identified by him which she hadn't been able to address at the meeting itself.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the following issues be borne in mind when considering the council's future shape for Zone Working:

- Support for the See it, Solve it principle;
- Improved visibility for the Teams within the Communities;
- Partnership working could provide valuable opportunities for the future in terms of resources and work priorities;
- Improved vehicle capacity;
- Investigate future opportunities for efficiencies and additional income;
- Under resourcing issues in Zone 3 need to be addressed;
- The unique role of the teams needs continued support;
- Seek improved liaison with the Essex County Council Highway Ranger teams;
- Greater capitalisation of the fact that the face of the Council within communities is embodied by the Zone Team members;
- Need for a measured approach to outsourcing of functions as full support for this approach is not clear;
- The publication of enforcement activity on the website is welcomed;
- The further development of the Junior Warden scheme across the Borough warrants greater support;
- The special skills available within the individual team members and the quality of the service needs to be acknowledged and supported;
- Opportunities to utilise the Neighbourhood Action Panel regime to publicise and co-ordinate activities needs to be explored;
- Support for community activities rather than the delivery of the activities was a welcome development.

26. Work Programme 2013-14

The Panel considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive setting out the current Work Programme for the Panel for 2013-14.

The Work Programme had been updated since the meeting of the Panel held on 4 November 2013 to reflect decisions in relation to the status of the report on the Council's Market Strategy, the conclusion of the work of the 20 mph Task and Finish Group and the establishment of an Alcohol Consumption Task and Finish Group

RESOLVED that the current situation regarding the Panel's work programme for the year be noted.

10 March 2014

Report of	Head of Commercial Services Head of Customer Services	Author	Tina Hinson ☎ 506903 Jason Granger ☎ 508824
Title	The Impact Of Welfare Reform on Housing and Homelessness		
Wards affected	All wards		

This report considers the impact of the Government's Welfare Reform changes on housing and homelessness and the Council's response to these changes to support those residents affected by the changes

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To consider the work undertaken to date by Colchester Borough Council, Colchester Borough Homes and their partners to support residents affected by the Government's welfare reform changes.
- 1.2 To evaluate the benefits of this work and make any recommendations back to Cabinet. The Panel will receive a short presentation outlining the current situation and work undertaken to date. External partner organisations will also address the panel to give their experience of the impact of welfare reform. Colne Housing Society, Colchester Foodbank and CAP Money have been invited to attend.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 The Government's Welfare Reform changes represent the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years. The Council recognised that it needed to support a number of its residents to ensure that the financial impact of the changes is minimised and to ensure a proactive approach to the changes so that other costs such as homelessness did not fall to the Council. In line with its terms of reference, the Policy Review and Development Panel are asked to consider the work undertaken to date.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not to bring the matter to the Policy Review and Development Panel - this would not allow a full and robust discussion of the impact of welfare reform on housing and homelessness and Colchester Borough Council's response to it.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 A range of changes to the way welfare works have and continue to be introduced. The changes represent the biggest transformation of the welfare system for over 60 years. The aim is to make the benefits and tax credit systems fairer and simpler. Some changes were implemented from 1 April 2013. Other changes will follow.

4.2 The changes have a number of objectives:

- Creating the right incentives to get more people back into work.
- Protecting the most vulnerable in our society.
- Delivering fairness to those claiming benefit and to the taxpayer.

4.3 The main welfare benefits and areas affected are:

- Introduction of spare bedroom subsidy for tenants claiming housing benefit and living in social/affordable housing (April 2013)
- Introduction of Local Council Tax Support (April 2013)
- Introduction of the Benefit Cap (July 2013)
- Introduction of Universal Credit (October 2013)

4.4 **Spare bedroom subsidy**

This change affects residents renting from the Council or a Housing Association. If a resident has one or more spare bedrooms their housing benefit will be reduced. It only applies to customers of working age. Those considered to be under-occupying (as defined through a set of rules) will see a reduction in their housing benefit:

- 14% of total rent for under-occupying by one bedroom
- 25% of total rent for under-occupying by two bedrooms or more

4.5 In Colchester our information suggests that 714 households are affected; 368 Colchester Borough Council (CBC) tenants and 346 tenants of Registered Provider Landlords (also known as housing associations). Of the total number of tenants under-occupying their homes 91 are under-occupying by 2 or more bedrooms. Based on these numbers we have estimated that this will represent a reduction of nearly £570,964 of housing benefit paid out per year. If tenants are unable to make up this shortfall between their housing benefit and the rent they pay they will fall into rent arrears which jeopardises their tenancy and is a loss of rental income to the Council or their Registered Provider landlord.

4.6 **Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)**

As part of the welfare reform agenda Council Tax Benefit ended on 31st March 2013. Local Authorities were required to introduce locally agreed schemes to provide support to residents in need of assistance in paying their Council Tax Liability. This new scheme is Colchester is known as LCTS. Colchester agreed its scheme in December 2012 and it was introduced on 1st April 2013.

4.7 The scheme is means tested with a number of criteria including:

- A capital savings limit of £6,000.
- Residents of working age are required to pay a minimum of 20% towards their Council Tax liability.
- Residents of state pension credit age receive the same level of support as under the former scheme.
- Second adult rebate ended.
- Income from maintenance and child benefit included as income.

4.8 Around 7,000 households in Colchester have been affected. There is a small amount of money allocated to support those in extreme hardship where it is judged they will not be able to pay.

4.9 **The Benefit Cap**

The Benefit Cap will limit the total amount of welfare benefits that working age residents can receive. The following limits have been put in place:

- £500 per week for families.
- £350 per week for single people.

4.10 Households are only excluded from the benefit cap if the claimant, partner or any dependant child receives or is entitled to the following:

- Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments.
- Attendance Allowance.
- Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment.
- Employment and Support Allowance (Support Component).
- Industrial Injuries Benefits.
- War Widows, War Widowers or War Disablement pension.
- Working Tax Credits.

4.10 Until the introduction of Universal Credit, income from welfare benefits above the cap levels will be deducted from housing benefit.

4.11 As at January 2014 a total of 71 households in Colchester have had the benefit cap applied to their income from welfare benefits. This has resulted in a loss of housing benefit for these families, which is on average £61.30 per week. These households are expected to make up these losses in housing benefit and pay their rent from the welfare benefits they continue to receive.

4.12 We have identified 13 households that may be at higher risk of homelessness because of the high level of reduction in their housing benefit. Households that will lose the larger proportion of Housing Benefit tend to be larger households with 4 or more children

4.13 **Universal Credit**

Universal Credit will be implemented on an incremental basis from October 2013. We do not have confirmation of when Universal Credit will be launched in Colchester but we do not expect this to be during 2014/15. New residents moving to Colchester from Universal Credit areas will remain on Universal Credit.

Universal credit introduces some significant differences to the way benefits are paid and administered currently:

- It brings together a number of benefits into a single application and single payment.
- It will be paid monthly in arrears.
- Tenants will be responsible for paying their rent to their landlord rather than housing benefit paid directly to their landlord.
- All claims will have to be made on-line, including notification of any change of circumstances.

4.14 It has been indicated that Colchester Borough Council will continue to administer Housing Benefit cases relating to those who are self employed or living in supported accommodation.

5. Colchester's response – mitigation by collaboration

5.1 Colchester's response can be summarised as follows:

- Recognition that national policy changes affected the borough's residents and required a local response to support those residents.
- Mitigation by collaboration – working with a range of organisations in Colchester to support residents and co-ordinating our collective efforts.
- Early intervention – contacting residents who we knew would be affected and offering them support and advice along with a check that the information held is accurate and to establish how they will be affected.
- Money management advice.
- Housing options advice.
- Job search advice supported by a secondment from Job Centre Plus.

6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 The action undertaken to respond to the Government's Welfare Reform changes has several links to the Council's Strategic Plan including:

- Enabling local communities to help themselves.
- Supporting more vulnerable groups.
- Engaging with the voluntary sector.
- Working in partnerships to help tackle health and crime issues.
- Showing tolerance and changing behaviours to create better local communities.

7. Consultation

7.1 The Government's Welfare Reform changes are national changes over which Colchester has no control. Consultation was not therefore relevant with the exception of the LCTS.

7.2 LCTS is subject to a public consultation each year to allow for residents input to the democratic governance process which decides criteria of support and funding for the LCTS scheme.

8. Publicity Considerations

8.1 A number of publicity activities have been undertaken. These are outlined below:

- The welfare reform agenda and the local support available has been promoted by a proactive communications strategy which began delivering consistent and targeted messages from May 2012 working together with a number of local partners including Colchester Borough Homes and other Housing Associations.
- Pre implementation mailings to each household affected by welfare reform, including leaflets and information booklets.
- Articles in the CBH tenant and leaseholder newsletter setting out the changes and where to go to seek help and advice.
- Regular regional press and social media articles to disseminate key information.

- The commissioning of two YouTube videos on the subject of Spare bedroom subsidy and the benefit cap which have been widely promoted through our RSL partners.
- Web based information carried on both CBH and CBC public websites, also the development of an online Discretionary Housing Payment portal which was widely publicised to make the process as efficient and accessible as possible
- Workshops for elected members outlining the changes and potential impacts.
- Training for front-line housing staff, including registered providers, hosted by the Greater Haven Gateway. This was joint training to raise awareness of welfare reform jointly delivered by Colchester Borough Council and Job Centre Plus.
- Three mutual exchange fairs. These fairs sought to raise awareness of mutual exchanges for those affected by the spare bedroom subsidy and “match” those under-occupying with those who were over-crowded. The most recent fair was organised by Colchester Borough Council and included 12 registered providers as well as 2 other local authorities. The DWP attended to offer employment advice and support along with CCVS, the Colchester Credit Union and CAP money. Two national mutual exchange organisations also attended; Homeswapper and House Exchange. Solo Housing attended to promote their scheme to rent spare rooms to young homeless people.
- Third sector training programme on the subject of reform to ensure information and support was cascaded to all service providers who could support Colchester’s residents and not just those relating to housing providers or benefit practitioners.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 Discretionary housing payments (DHP) can provide additional support for residents in receipt of Housing Benefit in need of extra help with their housing costs and where the household meets the criteria for a DHP. For 2013/2014 Colchester Borough Council’s grant for DHPs from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was £448,524. CBC agreed to commit £50,000 of its own resources to support DHPs.
- 9.2 As at the end of January 2014, CBC had committed £459,228 of its DHP budget (92% of the total amount available) to help support residents. CBC’s grant for DHPs for 2014/2015 is £423,918. Funding for 2015/2016 is unknown at present.
- 9.3 Current performance on the collection of council housing rents remains consistent with previous years, reflecting the pro-active work undertaken. At the end of 2012/2013 a total of 98.35% of rent had been collected. At the end of January 2014 the figure was 98.37%. However, it is not clear what the impact of any decrease in DHP, the ending of direct payments of housing benefit to CBC with the introduction of universal credit and increased financial pressures on council tenants will have on future rent collection. The Council’s recently published Housing Revenue Account Business Plan identifies welfare reform as one of the main risks and challenges which could affect the delivery of the plan over the longer term. A decrease in income directly affects the Council’s ability to provide services to tenants and maintain and improve their homes.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 10.1 This report does not relate to a new policy or major changes to a policy and therefore an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant.
- 10.2 Furthermore, as these are national changes the Government has undertaken its own equalities impact assessment.

11. Standard References

11.1 There are no particular references to the community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

Background Papers

None

10 March 2014

Report of	Head of Operational Services	Author	Matthew Young
Title	Waste Task and Finish Group // Update		☎ 282902
Wards affected	All wards		

The Panel is invited to note the progress of the Waste Task and Finish Group against its Terms of References and Desired Outcomes and make a recommendation to the Cabinet to continue the Group in the next Municipal Year

1. Actions Required

- 1.1 Panel members are asked to note and comment on the progress against the published Terms of Reference and Desired Outcomes document agreed by the Task and Finish Group. This document is attached to this report as Appendix One with the amended version agreed in August 2011 attached as Appendix Two.
- 1.2 To agree that the Chair of this Panel requests that the Cabinet continues the Waste Task and Finish Group in the 2014/15 Municipal Year and assists the Portfolio Holder in any reviews of strategy or delivery relating to the Recycling and Waste service.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Waste Task and Finish Group was set up to aid the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste in considering matters identified in the Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal that was produced by the Strategic Waste Team in January 2009. At that time the methods identified in this appraisal to meet the vision were agreed as follows:
 - Less waste is produced by everyone
 - There is an active reuse culture
 - Home composting is 'the norm'
 - Being able to recycle is easy for everyone
 - More waste is recycled and composted than sent to landfill
 - The collection service is high quality
 - There is high customer satisfaction with the service
- 2.2 The first meeting of the Group took place in April 2009 and it agreed to aid the Portfolio Holder for Waste and Street Services, in considering the amount of residual waste going to landfill, investigating recycling options. The Group developed its original Terms of Reference and this is attached as Appendix One.
- 2.3 In August 2011 the Group refined its role and produced the new Terms of Reference that are attached as Appendix Two.

3. Detailed update

3.1 Since 2011 the Task and Finish Group focussed itself on two main issues to look at in support of the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste:

- The experience and results from the Food Waste Collection Trial that was due to commence in November 2011
- The initiatives undertaken to strongly encourage recycling

3.2 Food Waste Collection

Over the trial period the Task and Finish Group received regular updates on the progress of the trial particularly the participation rate and the tonnages being collected. It reviewed the data being presented by officers and would comment on the success of the methods being used to encourage participation.

It also made suggestions on improvements that could be made to the service and questioned officers on the lessons being learnt as the Trial progressed.

3.3 The Council submitted an Expression of Interest and Outline Bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for funding to rollout a weekly food waste collection across the Borough along with maintaining weekly residual waste collection over the next five years.

3.4 This bid was successful and £2.3m was awarded to the Council to roll out the Food Waste collection service to every property in the Borough.

3.5 The Task and Finish Group has played an important role as a reference group for the design and planning of the roll out of Food Waste collections receiving reports on the progress and raising and commenting on issues in relation to:

- Service Design
- Equipment selection
- Supply and use of caddy liners
- Communication methods

3.6 The Task and Finish Group were particularly instrumental in influencing the decision to roll out the service over a six week period and ensuring the supply of affordable rolls of caddy liners through a borough wide retail network.

3.7 The service has now been successfully rolled out across the Borough with the minimum of issues and is attracting between 60-70% participation from households. By mid-February the actual tonnage of food waste diverted from landfill and used for energy production was over 1,100 tonnes.

3.8 Strongly encourage participation

The Task and Finish Group have been keen to understand how it can improve the participation of residents in existing recycling collection schemes. To this end the Panel has received the following reports to assist its discussions and deliberations particularly on whether it is better to encourage participation through 'carrot' or 'stick'.

- Waste Management Report to Leadership Team, 2011
- Evaluation of the WRAP Separate Food Waste Collection Trials, June 2009
- Essex Household Recycling and Composting Performance 2010/2011
- Consultation on Changes to Local Authority enforcement powers, 2011
- Authorisation of use of powers under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) in relation to the presentation of household recycling and waste

3.9 Following these discussions the Portfolio Holder chose to adopt Section 46 of the EPA and also to further examine the adoption of incentive schemes

3.10 During the life of the Task and Finish Group the Council's recycling rate has increased from 36.8% to the latest rate at the end of December 2013 which is 44.3%. More importantly the waste sent to landfill per household should reduce from 519 kilograms to 430 kilograms by March 2014.

4. Standard References

4.1 There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; or financial; equality, diversity and human rights; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

WASTE PREVENTION AND RECYCLING OPTIONS APPRAISAL

TASK AND FINISH GROUP – (Policy Review and Development Panel)

Chairman: Cllr Nick Barlow

Terms of Reference:

This Task and Finish Group has been set up to aid the Portfolio Holder for Waste and Street Services in considering the reduction of waste arisings, the amount of residual waste going to landfill and other matters relating to the Waste Prevention and Recycling Options appraisal.

The group will also consider the types of waste collection services being offered elsewhere in other waste collection authority areas and the levels of recycling performance being achieved.

The group will need to have particular regard to the types and frequency of materials collected and the issues around the collection of food waste.

Desired Outcomes:

Improved understanding of the potential benefits, risks and costs associated with the options identified in the appraisal

Improved understanding of the implications to the Council of changes to the waste collections service

Maximising participation in kerbside recycling schemes

Improved understanding of the changes required to achieve recycling performance above 50%

Achievement of decreased amounts of waste to landfill

Improved understanding of customer behaviour issues in waste management

Agreement by group members on option/s to take forward

Acknowledgement of the waste hierarchy when assessing future options

PROCEDURE GUIDE

Witnesses (who/Why)	Organisation/Individual
<p>Officers of Street Services together with expert witnesses as advised and requested</p> <p>To advise the group as to the likely outcomes and technical implications of the various alternative options</p>	
Documents / evidence / research (what/why)	Information gathered
<p>Waste prevention and recycling options appraisal</p> <p>Waste to resources strategy</p>	
Site visits/engaging public/partners (where/why)	Information gathered
<p>Proposals to be put to the group as appropriate</p>	
Consultation / research (why/who)	Information gathered
Other methods used	Information gathered

Witnesses

Question Plan

Who / What / Where / Why / When / How ?	Information Obtained

Task & Finish Group Subject	WASTE PREVENTION AND RECYCLING OPTIONS APPRAISAL
Start Date	August 2011

Terms of Reference

This Task and Finish Group has been set up to aid the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste in considering the reduction of the amount of residual waste going to landfill. The group will need to have particular regard to the types and frequency of materials collected and the issues around the collection of food waste with an emphasis on monitoring the trial agreed in certain areas of the Borough. The group will also consider the types and methods of waste collection services being offered in other similar waste collection authority areas and the levels of recycling performance being achieved.

Specific questions to be answered or concerns to be addressed

Following the consultation in 2010 it was agreed that the Task and Finish Group's work would continue concentrating on two streams in particular:
Food waste collection – to further explore the benefits of food waste collection and to monitor the one-year trial agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste commencing in November 2011 in the following areas:

- Mile End and Tiptree: route 4 and 1 collected on Tuesday
- Greenstead: route 4 collected on Wednesday
- Fingringhoe and Abberton: route 10 collected on Thursday
- Stanway: route 1 collected on Friday

Strongly encourage participation – investigating methods to encourage further participation in recycling including looking at experience elsewhere from the use of incentives, enforcement and collection methods.

Relevance to the Strategic Plan and Corporate Priorities

This work supports the 'Clean & Green' aim and the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle priority

Key Stakeholders, Partners or other agencies involved

Ward Councillors in the areas of the trial
 Essex County Council
 Eastern Waste Disposal
 Street Services Zone teams and Professional Support Unit

Evidence and research to be gathered

Food Waste Trial

The Panel will receive regular updates on the work undertaken in preparation for the trial, particularly the communication strategy. On the commencement of the trial the Panel will receive updates on participation rates, tonnages collected and impact on residual waste and other recycling schemes.

Site visits to the processing business which receives the food collected will be arranged as well as the opportunity to discuss the service with the crew and residents.

For background reading the Portfolio Holder report agreeing to the commencement of a Food Waste Trial is attached with the address list of the properties involved.

Strongly encourage participation

The Panel will receive 3-monthly updates on recycling & composting rates, waste to landfill tonnages and indicative participation levels. Any schemes undertaken by Zone teams or the Recycling & Fleet service will be advised to the Panel.

In doing this the Panel will need to consider how the Council can:

- maximise participation in kerbside recycling schemes
- improve its collection arrangements with particular focus on the supply of black sacks for residual waste
- improve understanding of the changes required to achieve recycling performance above 50%
- achieve of decreased amounts of waste to landfill
- improve understanding of customer behaviour issues in waste management

Timescales, Communications and Reporting

The key dates are:

Food Waste Trial

Preparation for trial: August to October 2011

Trial commences: November 2011

3 month trial review: February 2012

6 month trial review: April 2012 - decision on moving to fortnightly residual waste collection

9 month trial review: August 2012

12 month trial review: November 2012 – decision on continuation and expansion of trial to other parts of the Borough or Borough-wide

Strongly encourage participation

Statistics on recycling and composting rates; landfill tonnages and indicative participation levels to be supplied on the following dates:

6-monthly performance: October 2011

9-monthly performance: January 2012

12-monthly performance: May 2012

3-monthly performance: July 2012

6-monthly performance: October 2012

Reporting

It is recommended that the Panel produces:

- A report in **March 2012** to the Policy Review and Development Panel and the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste on their views on the Food Waste Trial, what is working, what needs improving and their recommendation on the introduction of fortnightly residual waste collection in trial areas.

A report in **November 2012** to the Policy Review and Development Panel and the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste on:


- Their views on the Food Waste Trial and their recommendation on maintaining the service in the trial areas and extension to further areas of the Borough.
- Their recommendations on improving participation in all the other recycling schemes and residual waste collection arrangements in the Borough

Chairman	
Members	
Lead Officer	Paul English, Group Manager – Recycling & Fleet, Street Services

Policy Review and Development Panel

Item
9

10 March 2014

Report of	Assistant Chief Executive	Author	Amanda Chidgey
Title	Work Programme 2013/14		 282227
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report sets out the current Work Programme 2013/2014 for the Policy Review and Development Panel.

1. Decisions Required

- 1.1 The Policy Review and Development Panel is asked to note the current situation regarding the Panel's work programme for 2013/14.

2. Alternative options

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

3. Introduction

- 3.1 The terms of reference for the Panel involve reviewing and making recommendations on strategies and policies at the request of the Cabinet or a portfolio holder and making recommendations back to Cabinet for decision. In addition the panel can proactively identify issues requiring review and, accordingly, seek Cabinet's agreement as to whether and how they should be examined.
- 3.2 The Panel's work programme will evolve as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting of the Panel, the opportunity is taken for the work programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Work Programme has been updated since the meeting of the Panel held on 13 January 2014 to reflect the fact that the Cabinet now no longer intended to submit a report to the Panel on the Council's Market Strategy.

5. Strategic Plan References

- 5.1 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance, of which the review and development of policy are parts, underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

6. Standard References

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

**Policy Review and Development Panel
WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14**

	<u>17 June 2013</u>		<u>5 August 2013</u>	<u>16 September 2013</u>
Policy Initiatives			European Funding	Behaviour Change Economic Growth (including youth employment)
Review of Corporate Policies	Environmental Sustainability			
Task and Finish Groups				Waste and Recycling // Update

	<u>4 November 2013</u>		<u>13 January 2014</u>	<u>10 March 2014</u>
Policy Initiatives	Transportation Strategy		Zone Working	Housing / Homelessness / Welfare Reform
Review of Corporate Policies	Equality and Diversity // Annual Report			
Task and Finish Groups	20 mph speed limit // Update			Waste and Recycling // Update

Task and Finish Groups	Membership 2013-14			
Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal	Councillors Cope, Cory, Lissimore, B. Oxford, Willetts and J Young			
20 mph (work concluded on 4 November 2013)	Councillors Harrington, Lilley, G Oxford, L Sykes and Parish Councillor Gili-Ross			
Alcohol Consumption	Councillors Frame, Havis, Hazell, Naish, B Oxford, Quince			

