



Colchester
City Council

Cabinet Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ
Wednesday, 05 June 2024 at 18:00**

The Cabinet deals with the implementation of all Council services, putting into effect the policies agreed by Full Council and making recommendations to Full Council on policy issues and the budget.

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COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Cabinet
Wednesday, 05 June 2024 at 18:00

Leader and Chair	Councillor King Councillor Cory Councillor Goss Councillor Jay Councillor Luxford Vaughan Councillor Smith Councillor Sommers
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AGENDA
THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING
(Part A - open to the public)

Live Broadcast

Please follow this link to watch the meeting live on YouTube:

[\(107\) ColchesterCBC - YouTube](#)

1 Welcome and Announcements

The Chair will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chair will invite all Councillors and Officers participating in the meeting to introduce themselves.

2 Urgent Items

The Chair 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.

3 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.

4 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Cabinet will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2024 and 22 May 2024 are a correct record.

13-03-24

9 - 24

22-05-24

25 - 26

5 **Have Your Say! (Hybrid Cabinet Meetings)**

Up to eight members of the public may make representations to Cabinet meetings on any item on the agenda or any other matter relating to the business of Cabinet. Each representation may be no more than three minutes. Members of the public wishing to address Cabinet must 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. In addition, a written copy of the representation should be supplied.

6 **Decisions Reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel**

The Councillors will consider the outcome of a review of a decision by the Scrutiny Panel under the call-in procedure. At the time of the publication of this agenda, there were none.

7 **Housing**

7(i) **Housing "State of the Nation" Update**

27 - 34

Cabinet will consider a housing "state of the nation" report that includes topical and emerging housing related issues to help inform the Council's current and future housing strategy and housing policies.

8 **Strategy**

8(i) **Council Productivity Plan**

35 - 86

Cabinet will consider a report setting out the proposed approach for the Council's Productivity Plan for 2024/25.

8(ii) **Appointments to Outside Bodies and Council Groups**

87 - 112

Cabinet will consider a report proposing appointments to a number of external organisations and Council groups and also provides a

number of reports about the work undertaken by appointees to external organisations and Council groups in 2023-24.

- 9 **Waste, Neighbourhoods and Leisure**
- 9(i) **Fleet Transition Strategy** 113 -
144
Cabinet will consider a report inviting it to approve the Fleet Transition Strategy in line with the recommendation from the Environment and Sustainability Panel at its meeting on 21 March 2024.
- 10 **Planning, Environment and Sustainability**
- 10(i) **Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve Improvements** 145 -
166
Cabinet will consider the recommendations made by the Environment and Sustainability Panel in respect of Ferry Marsh Nature Improvements at its meeting on 21 March 2024
- 11 **Communities, Heritage and Public Protection**
- 11(i) **St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre Investment** 167 -
170
Cabinet will consider a report seeking approval for an investment of £200k into St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre to support its provision of community facilities for those in North Colchester.
- 12 **Resources**
- 12(i) **Fieldgate - Direct Award Contract for Main Contractor of Fieldgate Quay Repair and Development Work** 171 -
174
Cabinet will consider a report recommending the award of a contract for the repair and development work for Fieldgate Quay.
- 12(ii) **Local Highway Panel** 175 -
176
Cabinet will consider a recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 12 March 2024 in respect of funding of the Local Highway Panel.
- 13 **Economic Growth and Transformation**

13(i)	Draft Statement of Accounts 2022-23	177 - 184
	Cabinet will consider the recommendation from the Governance and Audit Committee meeting of 9 April 2024 in respect of the draft Statement of Accounts 2022-23.	
13(ii)	Member Development Group Annual Report 2023-24	185 - 192
	Cabinet will receive the Annual Report from the Member Development Group 2023-24 reporting on the delivery of member development in the 2023-24 municipal year.	
14	General	
14(i)	Progress of Responses to the Public	193 - 196
	Cabinet will consider a report setting out the progress of responses to members of the public who spoken under the Have Your Say provisions at recent meetings of Council, Cabinet and the Council's Committees and Panels.	
15	Exclusion of the Public (Cabinet)	
	In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example 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)

16 **Resources - Part B**

16(i) **Colchester Community Stadium Services Agreement**

Cabinet will consider a report on the renewal of the service agreement for Colchester Community Stadium.

17 Planning, Environment and Sustainability - Part B

17(i) Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve Improvements - Part B

The legal advice which had been received in respect of the covenant which existed on Ferry Marsh is submitted to Cabinet, as recommended by the Environment and Sustainability Panel.

CABINET
13 March 2024

Present: - Councillor King (Chair)
Councillors Cory, Goss, Jay, Luxford Vaughan, Smith,
Sommers

Also in attendance: Councillors Dundas, Goacher, Law,
Naylor, Sunnucks, Warnes, J. Young

838. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

839. Have Your Say!

Melina Spantidaki attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) about the bid she had submitted for a potential use of Holy Trinity Church. She had approached a number of community groups and individuals, including those who were homeless, who expressed their support for her proposal. Part of the proposal included the provision of kitchen facilities and washing machines for those who had need of such facilities, which extended beyond rough sleepers. Community 360 only provided emergency support for the homeless. Her proposal would provide more ongoing support and access to facilities which would enable the homeless to help themselves.

Councillor Sommers, Portfolio Holder for Communities, responded expressed thanks for her proposal. Holy Trinity Church would not reopen for a significant period of time. Officers were aware of her proposal and would be in touch when bids for use of the building could be considered.

Richard Martin attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to express his concern that the brief provided to the Independent Ecologist instructed to report on the Middlewick site would not enable an independent report to be produced. To produce a truly neutral report would place them at risk of breach of contract and to fulfil the brief would have to accept the premise of development on the site. A full independent survey would not impose the constraint as set out in the brief. This was a breach of the undertaking previously given in respect of an independent survey and in these circumstances it was difficult to trust the process as they were advised to do.

Alan Short attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings

General Procedure Rule 5(1) to express similar concerns. He had acted as ,an independent consultant and expert witness. If he had received this brief he would interpret it as needing to express an opinion on where houses could be built. The inclusion of Middlewick within the plan had been a mistake, albeit with the motive of preventing a larger development, based on a poor understanding of the biodiversity and of the potential mitigation. The brief should be revised and toned down and be signed off at Councillor level. Councillors were the decision makers and could instruct officers to remove the site from the Loal Plan.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability, responded and explained that she had been advised that those who had fed into the brief were those who had been critical of the original Stantec report and that they were happy with it. The brief had to reflect the parameters set by policy on Middlewick and what it was seeking to achieve was the best mitigation within the terms of the policy. The site could not be removed from the Local Plan at this stage as there was a process to be followed for any review of the Plan. There was still a significant amount of work to do in assessing evidence and outcome from the call for sites. Any revised plan would also need to be subject to independent inspection and found to be sound.

Sir Bob Russell attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) about the collapse of Middle Mill Weir. Prompt action had been taken by Council officers at the time to ensure public safety but in the intervening period nothing had been done. There appeared to be a stand-off between Essex County Council and Colchester City Council. There was a long diversion and the condition of the and equilibrium of the river was deteriorating and the southern bank was drying leading to fears of a collapse of the footpath. Inspections by experts seemed to be taking too long. The suggestion that the army provide a bailey bridge had been dismissed. Sandbags should be provided to raise the river level, as befitted the conservation area.

Frances Wagstaff of CO1 Residents Association attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) about the impact of the collapse of Middle Mill Weir. A temporary bridge needed to be provided now. Local residents remained concerned about the lack of access from Kings Meadow to Lower Castle Park. The barriers either side of the collapsed bridge were welcomed. However problems with signage remained, which was unclear and not being properly monitored. There were also concerns about safety due to uneven state of the path and the lack of lighting. Elderly and disabled residents of Riverside Cottages were effectively housebound due to the boundary fence from the Riverside office development, and there was also concern about the impact of increased footfall and anti-social behaviour arising from the diversions.

Councillor Goacher attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet to state that there was a perception that nothing was happening and that the situation was not being addressed urgently. The Council needed to issue some communication on what was being done. There was real concern from residents of the Riverside Estate about future flooding. The comments about the residents of Riverside Cottages were endorsed and there was concern about the impact of potential events in Lower Castle Park. Further information was needed on potential timescales for action.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, responded and

said he would ask for an update on the issues raised next week. He would also meet with those concerned on site to talk through the issues, together with specialists. The need for more and better communications and better signage was understood.

Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Waste, explained in detail the many actions that were underway to address the issue. A Working Group had been established involving teams across the Council alongside partners. Consultation was ongoing with a range of interested groups, including residents' associations and specialist groups. Specialist survey work was underway to assess the Weir and potential alternative routes. The Ministry of Defence had been consulted about the bailey bridge proposal but it was not believed that this would meet the MACA requirements. A joint Communications Plan with Essex County Council was being developed. The aim was to introduce a shorter diversionary route over the Cricket Club bridge but this was dependent on the survey and negotiations with land owners but this would be several weeks away as lower river flow was needed to complete the survey. This was a complex issue with many stakeholders involved and issues of land ownership. It would inevitably take time to gather and assess all the information to ensure that the right decision was taken.

Tony Cheeld attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to stress the importance for small cities of building and maintaining a brand. The Colchester City brand had been broken with the help of Dane Park, Church Manor Estates. The brand could be restored but it required consideration of every interdependent facet of Colchester, including effective engagement with residents and businesses and no further drift from the principles of democracy. The proposals for Crouch Street West broke all the Nolan principles. Colchester needed to be welcoming to visitors and the installation of cycle lanes could hinder the provision of parking and public transport.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, expressed his thanks for his passion for the city but said that the installation of joined up cycle lanes was part of ensuring that future generations had access to safe cycle and walking routes, so important for health and wellbeing, and played a role in reducing congestion. The Council was committed to public engagement as was evidenced by a 200 strong Resident Panel and its commitment to consultation. City Status in the round had improved Colchester's visibility and reputation.

Alderman Gerard Oxford attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to express his concern that section 106 contributions were not used to mitigate the impact of development in the ward where the development occurred. For example, funding for Highwoods had been diverted to expenditure on highways and also towards Northern Gateway. This would also happen with the development of the Mill Road site. Ward councillors were not engaged in discussions about allocation of section 106 funding so could not influence how this was distributed.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan, Portfolio for Planning, Environment and Sustainability, explained that some section 106 funding went towards a central fund used for highways and other infrastructure. However her experience was that the ward element always went towards the ward and was signed off by the ward councillors and was used for community focused projects. She would investigate individual cases if provided with details.

Carinna Cooper attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to highlight advice from the Planning Inspectorate that it was the responsibility of local planning authorities to ensure any certificates submitted as evidence as part of an application for 5G mast were valid, contrary to previous advice from the Council. The public would no longer naively accept false statements from councils. Many councils were being confronted with questions about the safety and legality of mast installations. The Council was in breach of the National Planning Policy Framework section 121c in respect of such applications by not ensuring certificates were valid. A brief search had revealed at least 6 applications which appeared to be fraudulent. The Council should cease any further approval of such masts until the matter had been thoroughly investigated.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, indicated that he would arrange for a written response to be provided.

Bevan Waghorn attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) about the Leader of the Council's involvement with Community 360 over the period it had provided a loan to its Chief Executive. Would the Leader of the Council be transparent and provide clarity on what he knew about the loan?

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that this was already in the public domain. He had been an unpaid volunteer Trustee for a period. He would reflect as to whether he gave enough time and attention but had accepted he shared a responsibility with other Trustees for decisions over that period. Three issues had been raised over which there were concerns and he had responded on two as he could recall the conversations at that time. He was not clear on the third so had sought further information from Community 360, which had not been forthcoming. He had done his best to assist Community 360 at the time, as an organisation which had done a lot of good work across the city. He would not make any further comment on the ongoing conversations between Community 360 and the Council and its partners and he was not involved in the detail of those discussions. However, he wanted to see a good future for them and for their partners in view of the excellent work they did.

Councillor J. Young attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet to suggest that it was time to review the Council's governance arrangements to ensure as many members as possible had the opportunity to be involved with the oversight of the Fit for the Future programme. The proposed KPI on relets was set at 73 days. It was appreciated that this was an outside target and that performance was generally about 42 days, but this needed to be reviewed in view of the pressure on temporary housing.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio for Housing, explained that in terms of the relet target the government now required this to take account of the relet of special needs and temporary accommodation, rather than just general needs as previously. This could be considerably more time consuming. Colchester Borough Homes would continue to monitor against the old target so progress could continue to be measured, The current performance was 32 days and the aim was to reduce it further to 28 days. Councillor King, Leader of the

Council and Portfolio Holder Strategy, agreed that a thorough governance review should be undertaken.

Councillor Naylor attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Cabinet about the Mill Road site. In return for giving up green space and the rugby club site, residents were promised affordable housing for families in need by 2022. It was now an eyesore, and there was delay while debt grew. Not a single new home had been built on the site. The administration continued to believe it could develop the site itself, but there was no evidence to support this. The decision to keep the site was costing £250,000 per month in interest payments. This could build one home per month for a family in need. Cabinet had rejected the only workable plan for the site at Full Council. This was frustrating and distressing for those in need. Now the administration had had time to consider the plan would it now accept this the only workable plan on the table for the site.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Hoder for Strategy, indicated he did not consider the Conservative proposal was a sound or deliverable plan. Consideration need to be given to the impact of the pandemic and the impact this had on supply chains and the time taken to get agreement on the junction. The administration remained committed to its plan to develop the site in the most cost effective way with its partners to meet a variety of needs including housing.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing, highlight the impact of national economic factors, including the mini budget, which had led to an increase in interest rates which had severely curtailed house building. The Conservative proposal had been rejected by Full Council, rather than the Cabinet.

Councillor Warnes attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet about the proposed KPI target of 73 days for relets. There had a been an historic problem within the authority in delivering empty problems. Every effort needed to be made to address this. Other remedies needed to be actively used such as tenancy management inspections to ensure properties were maintained and returned to the Council in a suitable state,

Councillor Smith, Portfolio for Housing, agreed with the comments and that tenancy management inspections were undertaken. It was emphasised that Colchester Borough Homes were in the upper quartile of performance on relets. The importance of the role of ward councillors in bringing attention to potential empty homes was stressed.

Gordon Kerr attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to highlight a few issues around local and national government finances and the banking system.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, thanked him for his comments.

840. Fit for the Future Transformation Portfolio

The Chief Operating Officer and Shared Director of ICT and Transformation submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member together with the recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 26 February 2024.

Councillor Dundas attended and with consent of the Chair, addressed Cabinet to urge it to accept the recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel, which had been agreed cross party. It was important that the impact on reserves was understood as the reserves were the constraint on what the Council could do in the future. Those councils which were in financial trouble had exhausted their reserves. The financial problems faced by such authorities was not caused by overspending on core services but through involvement in commercial projects which they did not have the expertise to manage and the impact that interest payments and minimum revenue provision had on their general fund budget. Whilst the need for difficult decisions was appreciated he did not support the Fit for the Future Programme. Cabinet must ensure that everything it did reflected the reserve position. The Medium Term Financial Forecast as presented currently did not reflect the true current reserve position. Therefore, it was important that the recommendation from Scrutiny was accepted so that the correct reserve position was understood.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, responded and explained that the administration was moving towards a better way of displaying its financial information and the discrepancy highlighted resulted from the way the information was displayed. The recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel was welcomed and the administration would closely monitor the reserve position. However, it was important to stress that the view of the section 151 officer was that the Council was not in the same position as some of the other authorities whose financial troubles had been highlighted.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, stressed that the administration would continue to discuss the position with the opposition and would act with care and thought. It was very much aware of the difficulties experienced by other authorities and would learn from their experience. The Council was not involved in buying property outside of the city or in commercial projects in other areas of the country but sweating its own assets. It was accepted that there were risks. It was accepted that there were gaps in the Medium Term Financial Forecast which needed to be closed, as there had been before. The approach to the reserves would be prudent. There was enough space in the reserves to support the calls on the budget over the next 3-4 years. It needed to be borne in mind that many of the difficulties facing the Council stemmed from the mismanagement of the national economy.

Councillor King highlighted that the Fit for the Future Programme underpinned the budget agreed at Full Council. It was a programme of change, but the programme set out how it would seek to engage with both residents and Council staff. It would deliver less in some areas but would aim to deliver better services in other areas through shared services and other new ways of working. It would seek to deliver the maximum from the reduced funding available. The increased use of shared services would also build resilience. He invited other cabinet members to explain how the programme would be reflected in their portfolios.

Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Waste, highlighted that new approaches would be taking to staffing, with less emphasis on temporary or agency staff, and to the vehicle fleet. The Waste Strategy Review would be published later in the year. This would seek to ensure the service was delivered in a cost effective way, although it would need to take account of the increased costs of recycling materials. It would also need to address the hybrid system of waste collection. The service would be streamlined and made fit for the future.

Councillor King explained that in respect of the Portfolio for Leisure, Culture and Heritage, the Council's continued commitment to leisure and to funding of the arts, which contrasted with how some authorities sought to address their financial challenge.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing, stressed that the old financial models were no longer suitable and no longer worked. The Council could not maintain services whilst it received below inflation rates of support. Therefore, services either had to be cut or delivered more efficiently. It was notable that other Councils, run by Conservative administrations, were supporting the approach taken by the Council and moving towards shared services. The Council's borrowing was under half of its borrowing limit and the Council was considerably less indebted than many other councils. In housing there was real issues arising from reductions in income and increasing costs from growing regulation. Relying on old housing stock meant an increased maintenance and repair bill. Fit for the future would deliver housing that was fit for the future.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, explained that a responsible approach would be taken to managing the Council's assets. The programme would involve a better understanding of the Council's assets and a rationalization of what was kept in Council ownership, and how best value could be extracted from those assets the Council kept.

Councillor Jay, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Transformation and Performance, highlighted the digital transformation that was integral part of the programme. This would drive the internal process changes that were necessary to deliver the programme. For example, improved call handling software was being looked at to strengthen the customer teams. Service reviews were underway. The necessary governance arrangements were being put in place. The Transformation Board was now in place and the Oversight Group would be meeting shortly.

Councillor Sommers, Portfolio Holder for Communities, emphasised that the Fit for the Future programme would have an impact across the city so it would be necessary to realign community expectations of what the Council could deliver. It would be important to work with partners and town and parish councils to ensure gaps in service were filled and vulnerable people and communities protected.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The portfolio of activity to transform the Council and ensure services are fit for the future and deliver savings required in the Medium-Term Financial Forecast be adopted.
- (b) The recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 26 February 2024 be accepted.

REASONS

To ensure there is a robust portfolio of activity to future-proof the Council, create efficiencies and increase income so that the Council is adequately prepared to meet the funding gap.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Progressing with initiatives that are not cohesively brought together is not a viable or effective option. The portfolio of work was designed collaboratively across the senior leadership team in order for relationships and dependencies between projects to be identified, including enabling resources." While several programmes of work have been identified, the 'Fit for the Future' portfolio needs to be kept under review and additional options for transforming services will be considered to deliver the anticipated savings required.

841. Hibernation of Colchester Amphora Homes Ltd

The Managing Director (Interim) of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member together with draft minute 415 of the Governance and Audit Committee meeting of 5 March 2024.

Alderman Gerard Oxford addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to endorse the proposed decision to hibernate Colchester Amphora Homes Ltd. His experience was that it was not fit for purpose. It had been unable to deliver projects on time or on budget and as a result communities and residents suffered. It was important that the Council and its companies concentrated on those things it could do well and where it did not have the necessary experience or expertise, it should commission others to act on its behalf.

Councillor Dundas attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet to support the proposed decision. It was important to reflect on what the initial ambitions had been and what had been achieved, particularly in respect of the Mill Road site. Information should be provided on how many houses CAHL had built and delivered, and how many of these were affordable or social. Further information about the scale of the write down needed to be provided, and from what budget this would be funded. Lessons needed to be learnt from what had happened, particularly the need to ask difficult questions and not to accept what was presented at face value.

Councillor Sunnucks attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet to endorse the comments of Councillor Dundas and to stress the need for the information on reserves to be provided quickly. The decision to hibernate CAHL was supported entirely. Together with the Council's experience on the Garden Communities project, this demonstrated the difficulties of public sector involvement with housebuilding. Further information was sought as to what was the intention around the two remaining major projects, Heart of Greenstead and Mill Road. In respect of Heart of Greenstead, it was questioned whether the Council had the necessary skills and expertise to complete the scheme. The site had planning permission so was saleable and the issues around the road junction would be better dealt with by a private company. The budget amendment he had brought forward in respect of this had been prudent and would have delivered more social housing. This process had shown the difficulty of presenting alternative ways forward.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, stressed that the administration acknowledged the value of alternative opinions and had made space for different ideas to be brought forward. It needed to be recognised that the Amphora group of companies had had several successes. The national economic situation had had an

impact on CAHL's ability to deliver its ambitions. The need for a questioning attitude to information put forward was well made. Progress on the Town Deal projects, including Heart of Greenstead, had been reported to the Scrutiny Panel and they were developing well, with a sound governance structure. The administration would keep the opposition informed on progress on Mill Road as matters progressed.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, thanked Richard Carr, Interim Managing Director of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd for the very clear report. This issue had been discussed comprehensively at the Governance and Audit Committee and it was appreciated that there were still some issues about the scale of the liabilities to be finally resolved, although there was budgetary provision to cover them. Whilst it was the case that some parts of Amphora had not achieved what had been hoped, this needed to be seen in the context of issues such as the Covid 19 pandemic and the difficult economic situation. However, the Events Company was going from strength to strength, and other projects such as the delivery of broadband had been a success. The proposal for Mill Road brought forward to the budget meeting was understood and was recognised as a potential option, but it was considered that the administration's proposals would be of greater benefit to the Council and residents.

Cabinet expressed its thanks to the Governance and Audit Committee for its work on this issue and the high quality of its debate and its clear recommendation in support of the decision to hibernate Colchester Amphora Homes Ltd, which was noted.

RESOLVED that the resolutions contained in Appendix 3 of the report by the Managing Director (Interim) of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd be approved, as the shareholder of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd (CCHL), to enable Colchester Amphora Homes Ltd to be hibernated.

REASONS

In approving the Future Strategy for Amphora towards the end of last year, the City Council had approved the principle of hibernating CAHL. Appropriate due diligence had now been completed on this intention and it was now necessary to consider the formal resolutions that are required to bring about that hibernation, with a view to completing this process by 31st March 2024.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Theoretically, CAHL could continue to remain in operation. However, for this to happen, the City Council would need to agree to continue to underwrite the costs of CAHL, in the knowledge that there was no realistic prospect of an offsetting income in the foreseeable future. Therefore, the costs of underwriting the losses incurred by the company would likely rise.

Another option would be to disband the company altogether. In practice, the steps required to disband the company altogether were essentially the same as for hibernation, but 'dormancy' left open the option of re-activating the company if there was a significant change in circumstances and it proved to be in the City Council's interests to do so. Hibernation or dormancy had been the option recommended by CIPFA as part of their review, as explained in the Future Strategy for Amphora approved by the Cabinet last

November.

Councillor Smith and Sommers (in respect of their role as trustees of St Annes Community Centre) declared an Other Registerable interest in the following item pursuant to Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

842. The Estate Plan

The Strategic Director submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, expressed his thanks to Patricia Barry and her team for the work involved in bringing forward the Estate Plan. This encapsulated the move to a Corporate Landlord model of managing the Council's assets. It would enable the Council to understand and manage its assets better and inform decisions about acquisitions and disposal of assets where necessary.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, highlighted the scale of work involved in taking forward the Estate Plan. This was a brave decision which would involve significant time and cost given the Council had responsibility for over 4500 structures, 30% of which were in conservation areas which could restrict the opportunity to develop them further.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The Estate Plan (Appendix A to the Strategic Director's report) be approved adopted.
- (b) Authority be delegated to the Strategic Director responsible for Assets and the Portfolio Holder (Resources) to approve the detailed estate action plan to be completed in May 2024 for immediate implementation.

REASONS

The recommended decisions identified will enable the Council to leverage value from the portfolio, manage risk, contribute to decarbonisation requirements, increase efficiency and ensure the estate supports the long-term financial sustainability of the Council. Implementation of the plan at pace will ensure maximum opportunity to support the fiscal position of the MTFF and the Fit for The Future programme.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were proposed.

843. Recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel – Assets

Cabinet considered the recommendation in minute 441 of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 23 January 2024 a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder for Resources provide further information, to a future

Cabinet meeting, on what is done to allocate assets which had previously been held under companies wholly owned by the Council, where those companies are put into dormancy.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It was open to the Cabinet not to accept the recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel or accept it subject to amendment.

844. Business Rates – Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

The Head of Operational Finance submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, introduced the report and highlighted that it would ensure a more proactive approach and a more effective and efficient approach to ensuring business received mandatory and discretionary support in respect of business rates.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The proposed Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief policy for adoption from 1 April 2024 be approved.
- (b) The Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief for 2024/25 as per paragraph 5.2 of the Head of Operational Finance's report be approved.
- (c) The change to the backdating of Discretionary Rate Relief to the beginning of the financial year from which the decision is made as per paragraph 5.8 of the Head of Operational Finance's report be approved.

REASONS

The policy has been designed to maximise the benefit of any government funded reliefs locally, this will enable the Business Rates Team to proactively award relief if a business meets the minimum criteria as set by government.

The policy provides Discretionary Relief whilst balancing the cost of relief locally against funding needed to support local services.

It is simpler for businesses to understand the period of backdating and a fairer system.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

To reject the changes and continue with the current policy.

To amend the proposed policy.

845. Request for Delegated Authority for the Award of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Contracts 2024/25

The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Housing for the award of the contracts for works within the Housing Investment Programme 2024/25.

REASONS

Within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Council owns almost 6,000 affordable homes, benefiting people in need of social housing. The housing stock is managed through an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) and each year a number of maintenance contracts are managed within an agreed Housing Investment Programme. This keeps these homes in a suitable condition, as part of an ongoing planned approach set from the HRA Asset Management Strategy and 30-year HRA Business Plan.

Contracts that are due to expire over the next year require new contracts to be procured and awarded for the Housing Investment Programme in 2024/25. These are contracts that are likely to require Cabinet approval due to estimated costs (over £500k for the scope of the contracts, over multiple years) and borough-wide span.

The decision to delegate powers to the Portfolio Holder for Housing to approve the award of these contracts, as they arise, will make those awards smoother and faster if they arise between Cabinet meetings scheduled for the next year, or during the pre-election period. This avoids delays in the delivery of improvements for tenants. A similar decision was taken in the last four years (2020 to 2023) and has demonstrated the success and benefit of this approach in past/current contract awards.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not to delegate the powers requested; but this would then need contracts to be individually reported to Cabinet for each contract award increasing the time and resourcing required, for a procurement process that is already heavily scrutinised and regulated. This would delay the start of contracts, and therefore the improvements to homes for tenants, whilst waiting for a Cabinet meeting to arise. The time/benefit balance would therefore suggest that delegation to the PFH would be more effective and efficient use of Council resources, without introducing risks; demonstrated by recent practices. The Portfolio Holder decisions would remain available for call-in should individual concerns arise.

846. Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets 2024/25

The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Jay, Portfolio for Economy, Transformation and Performance introduced the report and explained that the key performance indicators (KPIs) reflected the Strategic Plan priorities and the Council's financial circumstances. They had been agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and had been subject to scrutiny by the Scrutiny Panel. The KPIs were now supported by a much clearer narrative and supporting information to improve transparency and understanding. In June 2023, the Scrutiny Panel had

recommended that the administration look at continuous improvement in service performance. Some KPIs were still set at 2023/23 levels but it was important to recognise the Council's financial and resource position and accept the reasoning for these not being pushed forward.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2024-2025 as set out in the Chief Operating Officer's report be approved.

REASONS

To ensure that there is a robust corporate performance monitoring framework.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

To consider alternative KPI Targets than those proposed.

847. Amendment to Councillor Development Policy: Leadership Academy

The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Jay, Portfolio for Economy, Transformation and Performance introduced the report and explained the benefits of attendance at Leadership Academy and that the aim of the amendment to the policy was to ensure that the opportunity to attend was extended as widely a possible by involving group leaders in the nomination process.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio for Housing, and Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, indicated the value of attendance at Leadership Academy and their support for the proposals in the report.

RESOLVED that the Councillor Development Policy be amended as set out at paragraph 5.7 of the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer's report.

REASONS

The aim of the amendment to the policy was to make the process for the nomination for Councillors for the funded place at Leadership Academy more equitable.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not to amend the Councillor Development Policy.

848. Progress of Responses to the Public

The Democratic Services Manager submitted a progress sheet a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Democratic Services Manager highlighted that the outstanding response to Alderman Oxford arising from his comments at Full Council on 21 February had now been sent and that the outstanding correspondence to the Minister of Transport arising from the

Licensing Committee on 17 January 2024 was no longer necessary.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Progress Sheet be noted.

REASONS

The progress sheet was a mechanism by which the Cabinet could ensure that public statements and questions were responded to appropriately and promptly.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were presented to the Cabinet.

849. Recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel – Corporate Communications

Cabinet considered the recommendation in draft minute 446 of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 13 February 2024, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that he had suggested that where possible relevant information to repetitive enquiries should be put on the Council's website so that residents could be directed to obtain the information there. This could potentially reduce the call on the Council's Have Your Say! processes, which were being heavily used.

RESOLVED that Cabinet review the Council's approach to its corporate communications with members of the public.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It was open to the Cabinet not to accept the recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel or accept it subject to amendment.

850. Recommendations from the Policy Panel

Cabinet considered the recommendations made by the Policy Panel at its meeting on 6 March 2024.

Councillor Law, Chair of Policy Panel, attended and with the consent of the Chair, addressed Cabinet to introduce the recommendations made by the Panel. The value of the Policy Panel was also emphasised. It provided the Panel members and the wider Councillor body with an early view of proposed policies and gave an opportunity for Councillors to influence these. It provided an opportunity for their experience of ward issues to be taken into account in the development of policy. Thanks were expressed to the Democratic Services staff supporting the Panel and the Deputy Chair.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for strategy, thanked the Panel for its helpful recommendations. He had attended most of the meetings of the Panel and it provided value to the Cabinet. The Panel received issues at the right time to be able to influence them. In terms of Shared Services, their note of caution was accepted but the very real benefits in terms of resilience and capacity were highlighted.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing, and Councillor Sommers, Portfolio Holder or Communities, also emphasised the value of the Panel and their thoughtful and reasonable recommendations.

In respect of **Shared Services**:-

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet was mindful of the risks relating to shared services partnerships, including likely effects of a partner local authority withdrawing or issuing a Section 114 report
- (b) The concerns raised by Policy Panel members regarding the need to preserve the Council's sovereignty and maintain its independence were noted.

In respect of the **Parking Policy/Strategy**:

RESOLVED that the ongoing work on parking policy and strategy will cover car parks and parking across all parts of Colchester, and how multi-storey car parks are treated at their 'end of life' stage, with alternatives considered as to how to use the areas they occupy differently.

In respect of the **Case for Change to Active Wellbeing**:-

RESOLVED that:

- (a) An holistic active wellbeing approach to be pursued
- (b) Cabinet is mindful of health challenges facing residents, and the need for the Council to empower residents to utilise resources and facilities in their areas, and the need for the Council to be aware of the importance of locality regarding health and wellbeing resources
- (c) All elected members to be kept informed in advance of the details of upcoming engagement events with elected members, stakeholders and community groups.

In respect of the **Memorial Policy**

RESOLVED that the 'Policy for memorials within Colchester' be implemented, as presented to Policy Panel.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It was open to the Cabinet not to accept the recommendations from the Policy Panel or accept them subject to amendment.

851. Minutes – Not for Publication Extract

RESOLVED that the not for publication extract from the minutes of the meeting on 24 January 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

Cabinet

Wednesday, 22 May 2024

Attendees: Councillor Mark Cory, Councillor Martin Goss, Councillor Alison Jay, Councillor David King , Councillor Andrea Luxford Vaughan, Councillor Paul Smith, Councillor Natalie Sommers

852 Appointment of Deputy Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor Mark Cory be appointed as Deputy Chair for the forthcoming municipal year.

5 June 2024

Report of	Chief Executive, Colchester Borough Homes	Author	Philip Sullivan ☎ 01206 282919
Title	Housing “State of the Nation” Update		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 It was proposed at Leadership on 29 February 2024 and Governance and Audit Committee on 5 March that quarterly social housing updates that include topical and emerging housing related issues be reported to Cabinet via a housing “state of the nation” report with the aim being that the reports inform the Council’s current and future housing strategy and housing policies. These reports supplement the new quarterly assurance reporting to Governance and Audit Committee on the Council’s adherence to the new Regulator of Social Housing regulatory framework.

1.2 The report provides updates on the following topical housing related issues:

- Section 4.1 The Renters Reform Bill
- Section 4.2 Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) 2021-26
- Section 4.3 New build starts (all tenures)
- Section 4.4 Housing Ombudsman
- Section 4.5 Rents
- Section 4.6 All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Council Housing Inquiry
- Section 4.7 Households in temporary accommodation
- Section 4.8 The Social Housing Regulation Act
- Section 4.9 Investment in Existing Homes
- Section 4.10 The Regulator of Social Housing Quarterly survey for Q3

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 As this is the first Cabinet housing “state of the nation” report feedback on whether the nature of the housing topics covered and the level of detail provided meets with expectations would be appreciated and will help inform future reporting.
- 2.2 Subject to any questions or comments this report is for noting.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 There are no alternative options of relevance to this report.

4. Background Information - Housing “State of the Nation”

4.1 The Renters Reform Bill

- 4.1.1 The bill (that relates to private rented sector housing), including government amendments, was backed by a majority of MPs on Wednesday 23 April and subsequently entered the House of Lords. The bill’s primary aim has been to end no-fault evictions. Ministers had also been urged to use the bill to give tenants four months’ notice when they are evicted, rather than two months’ notice as had been proposed. However, the bill will not pass before the general election on 4 July.
- 4.1.2 *Without Section 21 evictions being banned as a result of the passing of the Renters Reform Bill some anticipated relief to the private rented sector and temporary accommodation needs in Colchester is unlikely now be realised in the foreseeable future.*

4.2 Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) 2021-26

- 4.2.1 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) advised in April that “the programme is very unlikely to deliver 180,000 homes” as originally planned. The government has blamed the cost of borrowing and materials on the need to revise down its target for the AHP. This comes at a time when there are also signs that the housing association sector is reducing the purchase of new affordable homes required from developers with new build developments. Fiona Fletcher, L&Q’s chief executive commented at the National Housing Federation’s Finance conference in March that “housing associations could stop buying Section 106 homes as they face a new homes “cliff edge”.
- 4.2.2 *Colchester has been successfully delivering homes under the AHP programme, however, the latest Government update shows the impacts nationally linked to increasing costs on the delivery of new homes. There are examples locally where registered providers are not purchasing Section 106 homes due to higher costs, viability and competing pressures on their available funds. In addition to the AHP, the City Council has introduced a new build acquisition programme to supplement the existing successful former local authority home buy back programme.*

4.3 New build starts (all tenures)

- 4.3.1 The number of new build starts in England fell 16% in 2023 compared with the previous year, according to the latest government figures. In the year to 31 December 2023, construction began on 148,930 homes, down from 178,110 in 2022.
- 4.3.2 *Colchester’s Planning Team Annual Monitoring Report for 2022/23 shows that there were 711 completions in Colchester across all tenures of which 172 were affordable housing completions (including the Council’s acquisitions and housebuilding programme). This is against a target of new affordable homes of 380 over three years (2023-26). The report also states that “when taking an average over the past five years, Colchester has provided a net additional 1,016 new homes per year, which provides reassurance on future target delivery.”*

4.4 Housing Ombudsman

- 4.4.1 The profile of the Ombudsman within the sector continues to be very high. Its Complaint Handling Code sets out requirements for member landlords that allows them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. The purpose of the Code is to enable landlords to resolve complaints raised by residents quickly and use the data and learning from

complaints to drive service improvements. From 1 April 2024, the Code becomes statutory meaning that member landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements.

- 4.4.2 The Housing Ombudsman is proposing to increase its payable fee per home by 40% to £8.03, up from £5.75 last year to fund its increased workload.
- 4.4.3 In April it published a report titled Learning from Severe Maladministration in which it described cases involving eight housing association and local authority landlords. In the same month it issued the findings of an independent review it had ordered into how Orbit Group had handled damp and mould. The review involved 7 cases of damp and mould where the Ombudsman had found maladministration, including severe maladministration. The review made 15 recommendations.
- 4.4.4 *CBH has completed a self assessment against the new Complaints Handling Code and this will be submitted, as required for landlords with over 1,000 homes, to the Ombudsman by 30th June 2024. Consistent with many in the sector, CBH is continuing to see a higher volume of complaints being escalated to the Ombudsman and more findings of maladministration. These will be routinely reported as they arise to the Governance and Audit Committee, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Principal Liaison meeting along with any lessons learned from both CBH complaints and sector wide reviews.*
- 4.4.5 *Under the new Code we are required to have a “Member Responsible for Complaints”. We have two and these are Geoff Beales, Housing Strategy and Assurance Manager for the City Council and Ray Sharp, Board member for CBH.*

4.5 Rents

- 4.5.1 The government announced in April that the existing social housing rent settlement will be rolled over by a further year until April 2026. It means annual rent increases will continue to be capped at Consumer Price Index (CPI) of inflation plus 1% for 2025-26.
- 4.5.2 *This will be favourable for Colchester as the assumption in the HRA Business Plan has been a CPI only uplift for 2025-26. We await a decision from government on the longer term rent settlement for the sector, but do not anticipate this decision being made prior to the General Election.*

4.6 All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Council Housing Inquiry

- 4.6.1 The APPG, chaired by Matt Western MP, is conducting an inquiry into the current condition, and future needs, of council housing. The APPG invited local authorities with Housing Revenue Accounts to take part by completing a short survey about the investment needs of housing stock, HRA finances, new build and debt.
- 4.6.2 *Colchester completed the survey and supported the suggestion in the survey for HRA debt to be written off. In addition we highlighted the need for a rent settlement of at least CPI+1% and for this to be over a longer period (ideally for the 30 year life of the business plan). The opportunity was also taken to add comments on our local housing crisis, including the very significant increase and high spend on temporary accommodation costs.*

4.7 Households in temporary accommodation

- 4.7.1 The number of households in temporary accommodation in England increased from 104,540 at the end of Q1 2023 to a record high of 112,660 at the end of Q4 2023 (GOV.UK Statutory homelessness live tables). It's not uncommon for temporary

accommodation spend to account for more than 20% of a district council's total budget and in some cases it's closer to 50% (*District Councils Network briefing, March 2024*). Housing benefit subsidy now covers just 38% of district councils' temporary accommodation costs on average. This compares to the 90% intended when the cap was introduced in 2011.

- 4.7.2 *Colchester is significantly impacted by the demand for and costs associated with temporary accommodation. The Council's temporary accommodation costs have increased from a net cost of £1.14m in 2019/20 to £3.3m in 2023/24. Temporary accommodation cost is up from 5% to 12% of the Council's net revenue budget. This is crucial to the resources that Colchester has available to deliver services as costs associated with temporary accommodation are met from the General Fund. The total number of households housed by Colchester in temporary accommodation stood at 319 as at 18 April, up from 298 at the end of March 2023. Further lobbying by the City Council of government both directly and through bodies such as the District Councils Network and National Federation of ALMOs will continue, for example, in respect of the need for housing benefit subsidies to be brought back in line with current accommodation costs.*
- 4.7.3 *As well as developing and implementing a Temporary Accommodation Action Plan the Council has raised the profile of the Housing Crisis through its Housing Insights Report and the Housing Summit held in February. In addition, specific activity progressed in the last quarter includes exploring the use of modular homes and a review of whether to invest in new permanent or temporary accommodation. In addition, exploratory discussions with the University have continued about the possibility of using student accommodation to ease the pressure on temporary accommodation. A research project by the Council's Housing Strategy team is also underway to identify what will encourage tenants to downsize and free up much needed larger accommodation to relieve the pressure on temporary accommodation.*
- 4.7.4 *As part of the Housing Provision "Fit for the Future" project work is being progressed to develop a strategic partnership with housing association(s) to increase the volume of new affordable housing being delivered. The aim of this project is to maximise new housing investment into Colchester. The "buy back" programme referred to in 4.2.2 above is also targeted at providing permanent homes for families in temporary accommodation.*

4.8 **The Social Housing Regulation Act**

- 4.8.1 Last July, the Social Housing Regulation Act received Royal Assent, ushering in a new era of regulation for the social housing sector. The Act introduces several reforms including transforming the role of the regulator, with the primary goal of empowering residents and improving access to quick and fair solutions to problems.
- 4.8.2 Since autumn 2023, the government has undertaken a series of consultations on the detail of the new requirements and how these will work in practice. Of particular relevance to the City Council have been consultations on:
- Revised consumer standards and a Code of practice
 - The Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code
 - The Competence and Conduct Standard, and
 - Awaab's Law
- 4.8.3 **The new consumer standards;** as of 1 April, the new consumer standards came into force. These encompass four consumer standards: the Safety and Quality Standard,

Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Tenancy Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standards.

In January, the government issued directions to the regulator relating to the provision of information on tenant rights and complaints. These requirements are now integrated into the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) commenced proactively monitoring landlords' compliance with the new consumer standards on 1 April. This proactive regulation will include inspections. Inspection can happen any time over the next four years and it is likely the Council will get 4-6 weeks' notice. In addition to consumer standards, the RSH may also consider issues relating to the Rent Standard because this also applies to local authority landlords. For landlords with over 1,000 homes the RSH aims to carry out a programmed inspection at least every four years.

4.8.4 Health and safety lead; The Social Housing Regulation Act also introduced a new requirement for all registered providers of social housing to have a designated health and safety lead. This means that from 1 April, the City Council has been required to appoint a designated individual responsible for monitoring compliance with health and safety requirements. There is also a requirement to notify the Regulator of the contact details of the health and safety lead via the Regulator's data collection website, NROSH+.

4.8.5 *In response to the current regulatory changes we have:*

- *commissioned Savills to undertake a "mock inspection". This will identify further activity to assist with our preparation for an RSH inspection. The mock inspection is planned for completion in July 2024.*
- *undertaken self assessments against the new consumer standards and identified opportunities to enhance levels of assurance.*
- *identified our health and safety lead and notified the RSH as required.*
- *introduced a new regulatory assurance framework through quarterly reporting to the Governance and Audit Committee. Reporting dates for 2024/25 have been set and the first report is being presented to Committee on 18 June.*
- *engaged with the Colchester Institute to establish if there is a potential partnership relating to the new Competence and Conduct Standard.*

4.8.6 *An introductory meeting with the RSH key contacts for Colchester has also been arranged for 17 June.*

4.9 Investment in Existing Homes

4.9.1 The RSH's annual value for money report published in February 2024 for the year to the end of March 2023 identified that the average bill for large landlords operating a social home increased by 14% in the last financial year due to inflation and increased spending on repairs and maintenance. The study covers 198 private registered providers that have more than 1,000 homes. Since 2021, the study found that more than 70% of the increase in the overall headline cost of operating a social home was related to maintenance and major repairs. EBITDA MRI (Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation, Amortisation, Major Repairs Included) interest cover – which shows the housing association sector's ability to cover ongoing finance costs from operating activities – fell to 128% on average in the sector. This was the lowest level since 2010.

4.9.2 *Colchester has been similarly affected by a marked increase in costs linked to both day to day repairs, tackling damp and mould, gas servicing, void works and capital investment in existing homes. The increased costs have arisen as a result of both inflation and higher demand. For example, the number of responsive repairs increased*

by 8% and damp and mould cases by 40% year on year. This led to overspends against budget in 2023/24 ranging from 12% for gas servicing to 88% for voids. However, the 2024/25 budget has been increased for repairs and maintenance works by £739k and this will be accompanied by improved spend forecasting and a more planned approach for certain works, such as fencing. Spend will be carefully tracked each month and, should it be identified at any point that overspends are forecast, appropriate steps will be taken to manage any risks.

4.10 The RSH Quarterly survey for Q3 (October to December 2023)

4.10.1 Some topical data from the RSH's quarterly survey published in March 2024 includes:

- Annual price growth in the construction industry slowed further over the quarter and is estimated to have stood at 3.1% at the end of December 2023, compared with the record annual growth in May 2022 and June 2022 of 10.7%. This includes annual increases in the prices of new works of 3.8%, and in repairs and maintenance works of 1.8%.
- Overall construction output decreased by 1.3% in the quarter to December 2023 when compared to the previous quarter. This decline resulted solely from a decrease in new works by 5.0%, partially offset by an increase in repair and maintenance works of 4.0%.
- House prices in England fell overall by 2.1% in the year to December 2023, reaching an average of £302,000 with regional variation recorded.
- Although inflation is predicted to ease over the coming months, interest rates are likely to remain elevated, and providers must be prepared to handle further increases in interest payments and operating costs, particularly if they have previously benefitted from relatively low fixed-price contracts or debt.
- The challenge of balancing stock decency and remediation requirements with the need to invest in decarbonisation measures and the construction of new homes will continue, and providers must be able to identify areas where liquidity may be restricted and ensure that contingency plans and mitigations remain robust.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

5.1 There are no decisions nor policy changes being recommended and hence no direct equality, diversity and human rights implications.

6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 The services and projects delivered by the Council and CBH contribute directly to the following Strategic Plan 2023-2026 priority areas:

- **Respond to the climate emergency**
 - Reduce our carbon footprint.
 - Ensure Council homes benefit from increased energy efficiency.
- **Deliver Modern Services for a Modern City**
 - The Colchester Council family of organisations work together to a shared and ambitious vision for the future of our city.
 - Continue to invest in our homes to deliver quality social homes and services for tenants and leaseholders.
 - Put communities and their needs at the heart of our vision and support local areas as they help shape and deliver services which are most important to them.
 - Work closely with partners, charities and organisations to add value.
- **Improve health, well-being, and happiness**
 - Tackle the causes of inequality and support our most vulnerable people.

- Work with residents and partners to address quality of life and issues of happiness.
- **Deliver homes for those most in need**
 - Increase the number and quality and types of affordable homes.
 - Meet our duty to prevent or assist those facing homelessness.

7. Consultation

7.1 This report is for information and has not been subject to consultation.

8. Publicity Considerations

8.1 There are no decisions linked to this report that will need to be communicated.

9. Financial implications

9.1 There are no financial implications directly linked to this report.

10. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

10.1 There are no health, wellbeing and community safety implications directly linked to this report.

11. Health and Safety Implications

11.1 There are no health and safety implications directly linked to this report.

12. Risk Management Implications

12.1 Any risk management implications have been incorporated in the body of the report.

13. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

13.1 There are no environmental or sustainability implications directly linked to this report.

5 June 2024

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Richard Block richard.block@colchester.gov.uk
Title	Council Productivity Plan		
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 When the Local Government Finance Settlement was published in late 2023, there was a requirement placed on Councils to publish a Productivity Plan each year. This report brings forward the proposed approach for the Council’s Productivity Plan for 2024/25

2. Recommended Decision

2.1 That the Productivity Plan at Appendix A, underpinned by the items listed at 2.4 in the report, be approved.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

3.1 To deliver on the Government’s requirement and demonstrate the Council’s commitment to deliver efficiency and improved outcomes for communities.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 Do nothing – not an option due to the Government’s requirement to publish a Productivity Plan.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 When the Local Government finance settlement for 24/25 was published in late 2023, it included a requirement for local authorities to develop and share Productivity Plans on their website. These plans, which must be published by the summer Parliamentary recess, should set out how Councils will improve service performance and become more efficient.
- 5.2 The Government has requested that the Plans should be short and draw on work councils have already done, identifying ways to unlock productivity improvements and setting out the key implementation milestones.
- 5.3 Government expects the Productivity Plans to cover four main areas:
- a. transformation of services to make better use of resources;
 - b. opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design;
 - c. ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems;
 - d. barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove.
- 5.4 This Council has a track record of driving efficiencies and productivity that was recognised in the Local Government Peer Review conducted in September 2022. Prior to the announcement of the requirement for productivity plans, preparations were well underway to develop the Council “Fit for the Future” plan which fulfils same aim as the recently announced requirement for a Productivity Plan. Fit for the Future was previously considered in detail by the Scrutiny Panel in February 2024 and was subsequently adopted by Cabinet in March 2024.
- 5.5 The performance of this Council compared to other Councils has also recently been recognised through published performance measures introduced by the Office for Local Government (OFLOG).
- 5.6 To avoid duplication and ensure the most efficient response to the requirement for a productivity plan, it is proposed that the “Fit for the Future” plan forms the basis of this Councils productivity plan. A summary is show at appendix A and it is proposed to submit this as the Council’s productivity plan.
- 5.7 Under the umbrella of North Essex Councils, a programme to collaborate and share services across Colchester City Council, Epping Forest District Council and Braintree District Council has been launched. Each Council has developed a Fit for the Future transformation plan and the 3 Councils have agreed to work collaboratively on our respective plans ensuring further efficiency and productivity.

6.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 As changes are made to services and staffing structures through the fit for the future programme, equality and diversity implications will be assessed using individual equality impact assessments.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 ‘Fit for the Future’ will directly deliver against the Modern City Services strand of the strategic plan. When making any changes to services a key consideration of the future service provision will be contribution to all objectives of the Strategic Plan.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Fit for the Future included a detailed communications plan which demonstrates the commitment to engage and consult with staff informally. Staff and the recognised trade union will also be consulted formally about any changes to staffing structures and roles.
- 8.2 Stakeholders and the public will also be consulted throughout using various mechanisms and existing networks including One Colchester and the Residents Panel.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 The detailed communications plan included as part of Fit for the Future demonstrates how changes will be managed.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 'Fit for the Future' is essential to deliver budget savings required by the revised Medium Term Financial Forecast. By developing a 3-year planned strategic programme of change, savings can be delivered progressively avoiding the need for the development of new budget savings plans each year.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 There are no implications.

12. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 12.1 The implications of each programme will be carefully considered as changes to services are considered).
- 12.2 Several elements of 'Fit for the Future' have real potential to support the Council's strategic objectives relating to environmental sustainability such as the review of the waste strategy, review of our assets, and the review of the street care and greening services.

13. Health and Safety Implications

- 13.1 There are no direct health and safety implications associated with this report.

14. Risk Management Implications

- 14.1 Each programme that makes up 'Fit for the Future' will have its own risk register which in turn will feed into an overall risk register for the portfolio of activity. This will be reviewed and managed through the governance adopted previously by Cabinet.

Appendices

Appendix A – Council Productivity Plan

Background Papers

None

1 Fit for the Future – Our plan to transform of services to make better use of resources, to take advantage of advances in technology, make better use of data to inform decision making and service design and to reduce wasteful spend.

1.1 Through “Fit for the Future” we are starting a portfolio of work which will span the next three years to respond to challenges we face to:

- Run council services within budgets
- Adapt our services to meet the changing needs of our communities
- Seek opportunities for additional income
- Invest in technology and the skills of our workforce to enable efficiencies and modernise services.

1.2 The portfolio of work shown at [appendix A](#) will involve a change in our relationship with our residents, communities and partners.

1.3 We will continue to do all we can to protect those residents who are most vulnerable and do what we can to mitigate the impact changes may have on them.

1.4 We will do all that can to support our people through this change, in line with our values. We will show integrity and kindness, be open and honest, demonstrate commitment to our skills, expertise and creativity, and maintain our pride in public service.

1.6 Our Fit for the Future portfolio will look at the organisation as whole and aligns our programmes of work into 5 streams of governance:

- Environment
- Leisure and Economy
- Housing
- Assets
- Corporate

The projects, programmes and targets within the portfolio will evolve over time but the initial anticipated financial benefits are summarised below:

	24/25		25/26		26/27		Total
Stream	Savings	Income	Savings	Income	Savings	Income	
Environment	100K	1.055M	150K	103K	1.75M	-	£3.158 million
Leisure & Economy	146K	100K	-	-	210K	515K	£1.171 million
Assets	300K	-	-	-	-	-	£0.3 million
Housing	-	-	-	-	200K	-	£0.2 million
Corporate	143K	-	-	-	-	-	£0.143 million
Total Portfolio	689K	1.155M	150K	103K	2.16M	515K	£4.772 million

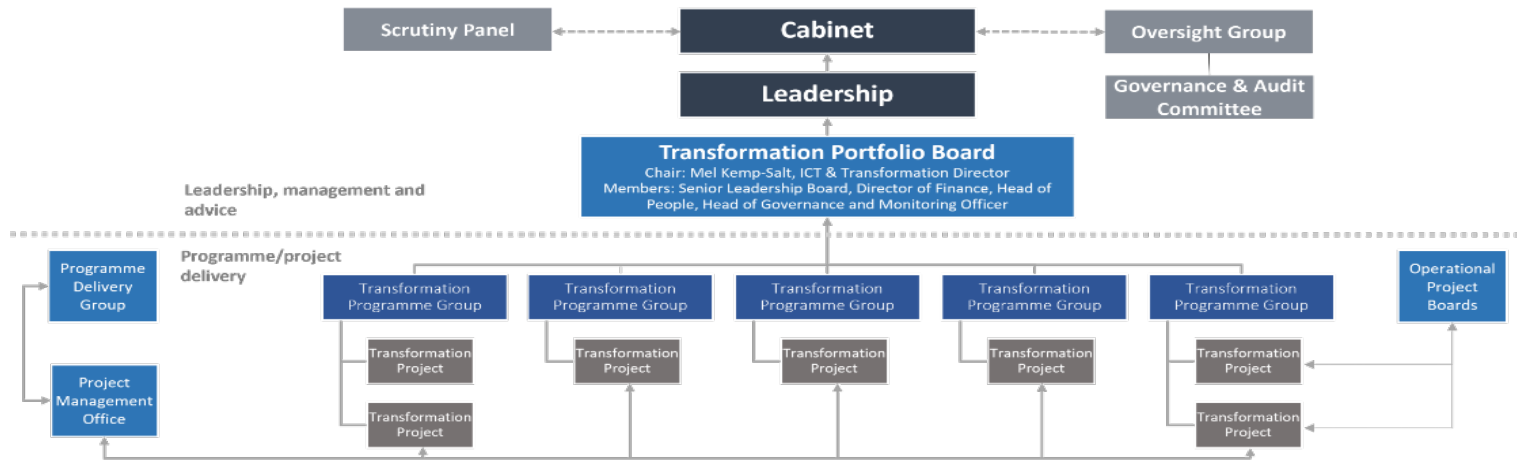
2. Workforce Development

2.1 The changes required by Fit for the Future are significant and this will require significant development of our workforce. The plan is underpinned by a comprehensive workforce plan to ensure staff have the necessary skills for the portfolio to be delivered and for productivity to be enhanced. A summary is shown below:

Sustainable	Establishment is affordable within the council’s budget; work is achievable, fulfilling, and long hours are not the norm. Core workforce, with ability to bring in additional interim capacity and expertise. Staff are fulfilled, quality of work life is positive, and needs are being met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFF Change Management Policy Review • Change Management Leadership Programme • Service workforce/organisational development plans
Agile and Resilient	Workforce will be supported to adapt and thrive in a constantly changing environment, by focusing on people’s wellbeing, physical and mental health utilising skills and sharing knowledge across the council, systems and partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing strategy • Enabling more movement across the council to re-deploy staff where needed and support career aspiration • Formal mentoring and buddying system
Inclusive	Increased diversity and good representation across the council against each protected characteristic. Workforce reflective of our communities and EDI embedded in every workforce activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New EDI Strategy linked to LGA equalities framework • Reverse mentoring • EDI KPIs and monitoring
Future Skills	What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means and impact to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills taskforce to identify future skills • Skills audit and gap analysis • L&D plans linked to priorities • Career pathways • Digital skills
Leadership	Lead transformation positively and collaboratively understanding and managing the impact of change on people Continually model the council’s core values Be committed to leading a diverse workforce and promoting inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership development programme aligned to strategic priorities, core values and transformation • Future leaders’ talent management programme • New leaders’ induction programme
System working /shared service opportunities	Build on existing and forge new partnerships, work collaboratively to realise the opportunities that shared services can bring; resilience, improving capacity, building relationships, retaining staff, service efficiencies and improved customer journey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a framework to support the delivery of future shared services: • Business case development, models of delivery, culture development, change process, staff involvement and engagement plan.

3. Oversight and Governance

3.1 Effective oversight and governance to provide oversight and performance monitoring/management of the plan is also vital. A summary of the fit for the future governance is shown below.



4. Barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove.

4.1 A summary of the barriers that inhibit productivity is shown below:

- Single year finance settlements are not conducive to the multiyear medium term productivity planning as demonstrated in this plan

- Continuing uncertainty and central prescription regarding recycling services is a significant barrier to planning productivity improvements in waste and recycling collection services.
- The restriction on Disabled Facility Grants to be spent only on Capital and not Revenue. An urgent review of the legislation is needed to assist Local Authorities to maximise spending
- The management of the many Resettlement Schemes being managed in isolation at a Government level does not support assist Local Authorities in managing all schemes in their areas
- Increase in demand for housing services due to demographic changes, population growth, Local Housing Allowance not meeting rents and a parallel shortfall in Government funding to meet the demand for affordable housing. Higher grant levels through Homes England would mean that some schemes currently not viable could be delivered.
- Barriers to planning and providing adequate housing prevention services, which could prevent demand for temporary accommodation and alleviate homelessness, caused by a need to focus on alleviating acute need.
- The government announced in April that the existing social housing rent settlement will be rolled over by a further year until April 2026. It means annual rent increases will continue to be capped at Consumer Price Index (CPI) of inflation plus 1% for 2025-26. Whilst this is positive, we need longer term rent settlements of CPI+1% so that we have greater certainty of income to be able to plan our investment in new and existing homes.

Colchester City Council – Cabinet

Fit for the Future Transformation Portfolio

13 March 2024

Fit for the Future Portfolio – Key Messages

- The scale of the financial challenge councils face is huge. The cost-of-living crisis, alongside the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and rising energy costs have placed significant pressure on our budgets and we simply cannot continue to operate as we are.
- Our response to this financial challenge must be radical; to close the budget gap and future proof our organisation, we will need to reduce our operating costs by 25% over the next 3 years.
- To achieve this, we need a fundamental portfolio of work to reimagine what we do as a Council and how we deliver it. The 'Fit for the Future' portfolio will make sure that we are exactly that; fit for the future of our city, of our organisation and of our people.
- Whilst this work will help to align us with the Medium-Term Financial Forecast and ensure we are closing the budget gap identified, it will also prepare us for the longer-term financial challenge that lies ahead.

Fit for the Future Portfolio – Purpose

- We are starting a portfolio of work which will span the next three years to respond to challenges we face to:
 - Run council services within budgets
 - Adapt our services to meet the changing needs of our communities
 - Seek opportunities for additional income
 - Invest in technology and the skills of our workforce to enable efficiencies and modernise services.
- The portfolio of work will involve a change in our relationship with our residents, communities and partners. The changes we make will have a visible impact across the city, and we must work to realign people's expectations of the services we deliver.
- We will continue to do all we can to protect those residents who are most vulnerable and do what we can to mitigate the impact changes may have on them.
- We will do all that can to support our people through this change, in line with our values. We will show integrity and kindness, be open and honest, demonstrate commitment to our skills, expertise and creativity, and maintain our pride in public service.

Fit for the Future Portfolio – Terms used

The following terms will be used within the project descriptions:

Several initiatives will include multiple elements from redesigned services and roles that result in a reduced cost of operation. The elements include:

- Investment
 - Commitment of funding needed to achieve benefits for delivering a new service or change to an existing service
- Cuts or reductions
 - Removal of entire services, or significant reduction in the scale of services provided
- Efficiencies
 - Savings
 - Services maintaining but delivered more efficiently/effectively
- Income
 - Additional money generated by a service

Fit for the Future - Portfolio Structure

Our Fit for the Future portfolio will look at the organisation as whole and aligns our programmes of work into 5 streams of governance:

- Environment
- Leisure and Economy
- Housing
- Assets
- Corporate

The projects, programmes and targets within the portfolio will evolve over time.

Fit for the Future

Senior Leadership Board				
Environment	Leisure & Economy	Housing	Assets	Corporate
Waste Services	Culture & Heritage	HRA Review	Asset Management	Shared Services
Rosa Tanfield	Frank Hargrave	Lindsay Barker	Patricia Barry	Richard Block
Greening & Street Care	Active and Wellbeing	Housing Provision		Future Workforce
Rosa Tanfield Mel Rundle	Rory Doyle	Philip Sullivan		Jess Douglas
	Economic Growth			Digital Customer
	Matt Sterling			Mel Kemp-Salt

Fit for the Future Savings & Revenue Financial Outcomes

Currently projected savings and revenue outcomes as of 9 January 2024

	24/25		25/26		26/27		Total
Stream	Savings	Income	Savings	Income	Savings	Income	
Environment	100K	1.055M	150K	103K	1.75M	-	£3.158 million
Leisure & Economy	146K	100K	-	-	210K	515K	£1.171 million
Asset	300K	-	-	-	-	-	£0.3 million
Housing	-	-	-	-	200K	-	£0.2 million
Corporate	143K	-	-	-	-	-	£0.143 million
Total Portfolio	689K	1.155M	150K	103K	2.16M	515K	£4.772 million

Summary of Fit for the Future Financial Outcomes

Currently projected net budget outcomes as of 9 January 2024

Stream	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
Environment	1.155M	253K	1.75M	£3.158 million
Leisure & Economy	246K	-	725K	£1.171 million
Asset	300K	-	-	£0.3 million
Housing	-	-	200K	£0.2 million
Corporate	143K	-	-	£0.143 million
Total Portfolio	2.044M	253K	2.675M	£4.772 million

Delivery of Fit for the Future (particularly later year savings) will require investment. Rather than building one-off investment into the Budget, proposals have been put forward for a Fit for the Future Reserve from a Reserve rationalisation.

Waste Services Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	£1.055M	£103K	N/A
Savings Target	N/A	N/A	£1M
Investment	None	None	£TBC

Owner: Rosa Tanfield

Description: Continue to be a leader in waste and recycling collections, ensuring that the Council is compliant with emerging Government waste reforms and setting out a plan to be more effective and efficient, whilst looking at new income opportunities, building on existing services that the Council provides.

	Project Manager	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Garden Waste Chargeable Service	John Kellett	Implementation Jan-24			
Creation of Waste Strategy	Rosa Tanfield	Draft strategy to E&S Panel Mar-24	Full council sign-off by Oct-24		
Delivery of Waste Strategy	Rosa Tanfield			Implementation ongoing	
Business Waste Service Expansion	Rosa Tanfield		Implementation		

- Garden Waste Scheme: New revenue from subscription fees 2024/25 - £955K; 2025/2026 - £103K
- Business Waste Service: New revenue from increased business 2024/25 - £100K
- Creation and Delivery of Waste Strategy: 2026/27 - £1M

Environment Stream: Waste Programme

SRO: Rosa Tanfield

Project	Garden Waste Chargeable Service		John Kellett
Description	A new opt-in chargeable garden waste service was launched in January 2024 as part of our Fit for the Future programme to bring in additional year on year income to the help close the budget gap. The new service has brought efficiencies within the service by rolling out a full wheeled bin collection for all residents, instead of the previous mix of sacks and bins. Not only do the wheeled bins bring collection efficiencies, but also aims to reduce staff sickness due to muscular/skeletal injuries and therefore a reduction in agency costs. In addition, financial support was provided to those that need it most, through a discount scheme for residents in receipt of Local Council Tax Support.		
Planned Activity	Continue to develop and delivery further self-serve options, such as 'Home Move' and 'My bin is lost/broken'		
Key Milestones	Launch of Garden Waste scheme 15-Jan-24 Price review 2025/26, autumn/winter 2024 Renewals for existing residents, March/April 2025		
Staff Impact	The previous garden waste service used 5.25 trucks and crews. With the new paid for service, three crews will be used, later expanding to four if needed. Some of the remaining trucks and crews will be used to help with flat collections, where there's a lot of work. The rest of the crews, initially two and later one, will be moved to fill empty jobs in the team, replacing temporary workers if necessary. The Council has job openings for Senior Operatives and Team Leaders, and the plan is to put these crews into those positions, reducing the need for redundancies.		
Investment Requirement	Capital budget has already been approved for purchase of vehicles and wheeled bins.		
Risks and Mitigation	Risks: -Reputational risk: "garden tax" -Operational delivery challenges	Mitigation:	-Clear and comprehensive communication plan -Data-led and best practice informed decision making -Whole-Council approach to project delivery, with risks and issues logs to manage and mitigate through robust project planning, management and delivery
Financial Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £955K net revenue increase 2024/25 £103K net revenue increase 2025/26 	What does this mean?	2024/25 - This is made up by additional (gross) income of £1.246m from the new scheme. This additional customer and client receipt income is calculated on the basis of £1.896M, less £650K (of which £50K is attributed to a reduction in credit claim income under Grants and Reimbursements) 2025/26 - This is based on additional income on the base budget for further potential new customers, if existing customers renew)

Project	Creation and Delivery of Waste Strategy		Rosa Tanfield
	Waste Strategy for Colchester		
Description	The development and delivery of a new Waste Strategy for Colchester, in response to central government guidance, the Environment Protection Act, the Environment Act 2021, the 25-year Environment Plan and other relevant legislation, strategies and policies. The aim is to deliver value for money, provide a safe, compliant, and resilient service, have a community asset based approach and minimise the impact on the environment. Running alongside this, waste reforms emerging from the Environment Act 2021 will see all residents and businesses being required to be consistent in the way they present recycling and waste materials for collection, and the way that Councils are funded to deliver waste collection services will change.		
Planned Activity	Review what we currently do and how we do it; draft a new Waste Strategy in winter/spring 2024; prepare for waste reform changes coming from the Environment Act 2021 imminent/April 2026 (flat food waste collections).		
Key Milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2024: Draft Waste Strategy for Colchester at Environment & Sustainability Panel • Summer 2024: Public consultation on Waste Strategy • Autumn/Winter 2024: Ratification of Waste Strategy for Colchester • Winter 2024 onwards: Implementation of Waste Strategy for Colchester <p>There will be also be major changes to food waste, plastic films and flexible plastics collections through the Waste reforms, Environment Act 2021.</p>		
Staff Impact	Additional internal capacity (project management) to deliver the strategy and changes will be needed. There is likely to be further staffing required at the launch of changes to support operational delivery. Some of this may be funded from DEFRA. Staffing levels and roles will be reviewed to deliver the strategy and waste reform aims and objectives.		
Investment Requirement	The strategy and option modelling will clearly set out the investment requirements of any proposals. This is still to be determined and will be dependent on the option agreed. Additional one-off funding will be needed to provide capacity to launch the changes. DEFRA have indicated new capital burden funding for the Waste reforms, Environment Act 2021 but the Council is requesting a review of the allocation to better reflect the operational need/requirement. Funding will be capital for new equipment, transitional to help with the launch and ongoing.		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational risk from the public on the changes being made to their waste collections • Inability to launch the changes to the timeframe • Significant capital investment required 	<p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication strategies will be vital, as can already be seen through the results of the communication strategy with the garden waste changes. Additional mitigation will be determined as the strategy is drawn up. • Additional one-off funding will be needed to provide capacity to launch the changes • Seek advice from experts to minimise spend and risk • Data-led and best practice informed decision making • Whole-Council approach to project delivery, with risks and issues logs to manage and mitigate through robust project planning, management and delivery 	
Financial Outcomes	Aim for £1M net revenue decrease in budget 2026/27	What does this mean?	This could result in the way that residents put out recycling and waste material and the frequency that they do this being different. Fleet and service roles may also change.

Environment Stream: Waste Programme

SRO: Rosa Tanfield

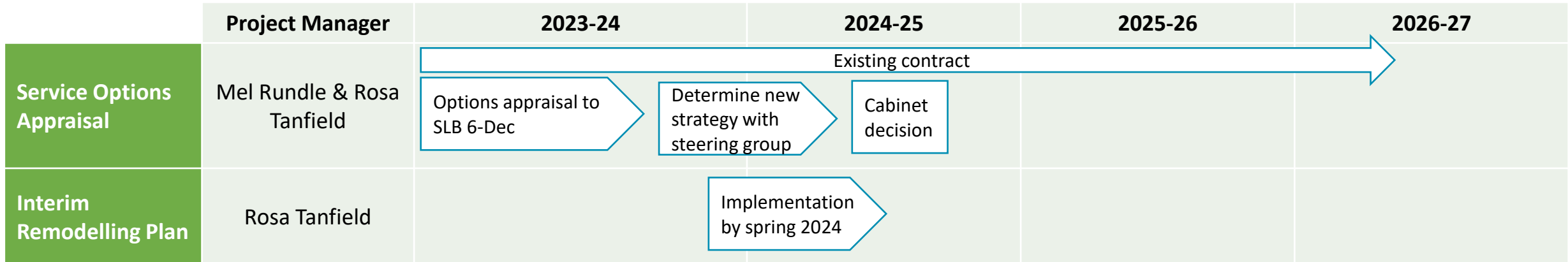
Project	Business Waste Service Expansion		Rosa Tanfield
Description	Waste reforms emerging from the Environment Act 2021 will see all businesses being required to be consistent in the way they present recycling and waste materials for collection. These changes and with the opportunity to build on the existing Business Waste Service, it is proposed that a business plan is created to expand the current service to enhance local businesses' waste management options, support compliance and to provide enhanced income and commercial opportunities.		
Planned Activity	Development and ratification of business plan spring / summer 2024		
Key Milestones	Spring/Summer 24: Ratification of Business Waste service proposal Autumn/Winter 24: Launch of extended Business Waste service		
Staff Impact	An additional crew will be required to service the new routes which will be funded from the new service offer by the additional income generated. The sales and process changes will require capacity from existing staff that will need to reprioritise other work unless additional capacity can be found. Commitment will need to be provided from our Marketing and Comms team to push the promotion of the service.		
Risks and Mitigation	Risks: -Public Perception -New vehicles is not available for operational launch -Inability to launch to timeline -Operational challenges	Mitigation: -Clear and comprehensive communication plan -Data-led and best practice informed decision making -Whole-Council approach to project delivery, with risks and issues logs to manage and mitigate through robust project planning, management and delivery	
Investment Requirement	Capital funding has already been agreed for new vehicle		
Financial Outcomes	Aim for £100K net revenue increase 2025/26	What does this mean?	We expect to see the current Business Waste Service expand and increase income generation and commercial opportunities

Greening & Street Care Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	N/A	N/A	N/A
Savings Target	£100K	£150K	£750K
Investment	TBC	TBC	TBC

Owner: Mel Rundle & Rosa Tanfield

Description: Reviewing what we do and how, in relation to functions and activities to do with grounds maintenance and street care and safety across the whole Council, and to consider and agree new ways of working, at the end of the current grounds maintenance contract, that achieve the objectives as set out below.



Programme Objectives

- Ensure functions, initiatives and activities (particularly those that are statutory), are affordable and delivered within the allocated financial budget
- Deliver fit for the future services that match the changing needs of Colchester
- Work with partners and communities in a different way going forward

Environment Stream: Greening & Street Care Programme

SRO: Mel Rundle & Rosa Tanfield

Project	Interim Remodelling Plan		Mel Rundle/Rosa Tanfield
Description	<p>Create and deliver a service plan for the next 2-3 years that runs concurrently to the review of our approach to maintaining our streets and green spaces (set out on the next page), to realign the service for any possible agreed changes, whilst also ensuring that during that period the service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers within the financial envelope – ensure all street care and safety initiatives and services are executed within the allocated financial resources. This could mean reducing operating costs by reducing service standard, removing Council assets that need to be maintained, changes to contracted work, and staffing reductions, as well as improving commercial income. • Proactiveness – Proactively address street care issues before they escalate, promoting a cleaner and safer environment. This means identifying efficiencies and could mean prioritising cyclical and urgent work over non-urgent tasks. • Partnerships – collaborate with various stakeholders to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of street care services. This could extend to private sector partnerships, such as that already in place with Waste Investigations Support and Enforcement (WISE). • Communities – foster a sense of community pride and engagement through clean and safe public spaces. This could mean greater focus on increasing volunteer activities, e.g. our existing Litter Warrior scheme. • Environmental impact – minimise the environmental footprint of street care operations and contribute to sustainability goals. This could mean looking a route optimisation, electrification of fleet and equipment, and reducing landfill for example. 		
Planned Activity	Staff consultation currently underway with Sweeper drivers on 1 full time equivalent staffing reduction, and agreement already given to reducing 1.4 full time equivalent Operative roles.		
Key Milestones	Review what we currently do, who and how we do it, and benchmarking against others in winter/spring 2024; talk to our stakeholders in spring 2024; launch spring/summer 2024; Subject to any changes to job descriptions and staffing numbers or consultation required, this will launch spring/summer 2024		
Staff Impact	Circa 60 staff are employed by CCC; Planned activity currently is underway to reduce the overall team by 2.4 full time equivalents. Further exploration and plans for service delivery could consider contracting works and/or reducing service standards, requiring less directly employed staff over the 2/3-year period, as well as seasonal only contracted staff. Staff impact cannot be fully determined until finalisation of the plan.		
Investment Requirement	Investment requirement cannot be determined until the final service plan has been agreed.		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>All risks will be measured through the exploration of the service plan and will be presented in detail as part of the final proposal, but could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to how parts of our city will look over the year • Reputational risk from the public regarding public spaces and how they are managed and maintained • Potential redundancy costs 	<p>Mitigation could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A contingency plan will be developed to address unforeseen challenges, including a phased implementation approach to minimize disruptions. • Communication and behaviour change activity will be key to success. • Training and redeployment options will be explored • Seek advice from experts to minimise spend and risk 	
Financial Outcomes	<p>Aim for £100K net revenue decrease 2024/25 Aim for £150K net revenue decrease 2025/26</p>	What does this mean?	We expect to see some redesign of staff structure and roles including a possible reduction, an increase in some income generation, and changes to our contracted spend.

Environment Stream: Greening & Street Care Programme

SRO: Mel Rundle & Rosa Tanfield

Project	Service Options Appraisal		Mel Rundle/Rosa Tanfield
Description	<p>Reviewing what we do and how, to determine the skills required to take a new approach to maintaining our streets and green spaces. Instead of having resource in CCC, contractors, and CBH the intent is to have multi-skilled operatives and align service delivery across the whole city in the most efficient way. This could be a variety of models, which could include a community-enabling approach in some areas and will ensure a more sustainable service that is fit for the future. This may impact how parts of our city will look over the seasons, with longer periods between grass cuts for example but we will continue to work hard to ensure the city looks welcoming for residents and visitors.</p>		
Planned Activity	<p>Review what we currently do and who does it in spring 2024; different service delivery options exploration in spring/summer 2024; talking to our stakeholders in summer/autumn 2024</p>		
Key Milestones	<p>Options appraisal: Committee review and recommendations to Cabinet – Sep/Oct 2024 Detailed proposal: Cabinet and council sign-off – by December 2024 Implementation plan: Implementation plan with phased timelines – delivered by October 2026</p>		
Staff Impact	<p>Circa 40 staff employed by the contractor (TUPE implications), circa 60 staff at CCC but ultimately the staff impact cannot be determined until the final service option decision has been reached.</p>		
Investment Requirement	<p>Investment requirement cannot be determined until the final service option decision has been reached however some capital investment for tools and machinery will be required for any in-house service as well as investment in some CCC owned sites to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p>		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>All risks will be measured through the exploration of the service options and will be presented in detail as part of the final proposal, but could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to how parts of our city will look over the seasons • Reputational risk from the public regarding public open spaces and how they are managed and maintained • TUPE implications as well as potential redundancy costs • Potential significant capital investment, subject to the final service option decision 	<p>Mitigation could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A contingency plan will be developed to address unforeseen challenges, including a phased implementation approach to minimize disruptions. • Communication and behaviour change activity will be key to success. • Training and redeployment options will be explored • Seek advice from experts to minimise spend and risk 	
Financial Outcomes	<p>Aim for £750K net budget decrease 2026/27</p>	<p>What does this mean?</p>	<p>We expect to see a reduction in contract spend, a redesign of staff structure and roles including a possible reduction and income generation opportunities</p>

Culture & Heritage Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	£100K	TBC	TBC
Savings Target	£120K	TBC	TBC
Investment	TBC	TBC	TBC

Owner: Frank Hargrave

Description: Provide a more efficient and entrepreneurial museum service

	Project Manager	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Delivery Model Review	Frank Hargrave	Options analysis/ consultation to reach agreement by Oct-24 or accept cultural exemption			
Hollytrees	Frank Hargrave		Options analysis		
Natural History Museum	Frank Hargrave	Options analysis and consultation	NLHF application – May '24	Development phase to RIBA 4 (if NLHF successful)	NLHF Round 2 app and delivery

- Museum service delivery model options (e.g. Charitable Trust) are being considered to achieve the savings target; however, these may have other implications and costs in terms of legal fees/ VAT advice and additional staffing.
- Other options such as Cultural Exemption on admissions at the castle may achieve similar savings more swiftly and without investment/significant risk
- Charging for admission at Hollytrees - estimated £100k income based on 20k visitors initially at £5 per head, (estimating an initial 50% drop) as well as joint ticketing with the Castle and an extension to the Castle's residents annual pass scheme.
- NLHF funding application being made in May 2024 with the aim of delivering a c.£5m redevelopment of the Natural History Museum.

Leisure & Economy Stream: Culture & Heritage Programme

SRO: Frank Hargrave

Project	Museums Delivery Model Review	Frank Hargrave
Description	Review exploring a new independent organisation, Charitable Trust/CIC or similar. Savings need to be balanced with new and additional governance and accounting requirements of a Trust. The new Trust would require time and investment to setup however it would provide further opportunities for fundraising and greater flexibility.	
Planned Activity	Production of a delivery model options appraisal including cultural exemption. Consultation with key stakeholders including Ipswich Council for finalisation of delivery model proposal.	
Key Milestones	Complete options appraisal Decision on delivery model Consultation with Ipswich Museums Staff consultation Cabinet Oct-2024	
Staff Impact	There are 65 FTE across Colchester and Ipswich museums. No change in staffing levels for museum service is expected but possible TUPE to new Trust as well as a review of skills and training needed.	
Investment Requirement	Investment requirement cannot be determined until the final service option decision has been reached	
Risks and Mitigation	Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reputational damage, miscalculation of finances, break up of partnership with IBC and loss of ACE funding 	Mitigation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due planning and engagement of appropriate specialists. Consultation with partners/funders
Financial Outcomes	£120K savings in 2025/26, if cultural exemption not taken up in 24/25	What does this mean? It is not anticipated that the model of museum delivery will impact the service

Additional activity under this programme includes PwC being commissioned for:

- Assessment of the viability of cultural exemption on Castle admissions. This would bring savings of ~£120K but would lower the VAT exempt threshold of the Council from c.£1.4m p.a. to c.£800,000 p.a. so has wider implications that need to be considered.
- Challenge HMRC on Non-Business Supplies, as was done for Leisure World. May take several years to complete but PwC estimate a potential rebate of more than £500K and future VAT savings.

Leisure & Economy Stream: Culture & Heritage Programme

SRO: Frank Hargrave

Project	Hollytrees Admission Charging		Frank Hargrave
Description	Charging for admission to the Hollytrees Museum.		
Planned Activity	Pricing structure developed following benchmarking. Admission will start at £5 for an adult with family offers and joint ticketing options with the castle		
Key Milestones	Delivery by Apr-24		
Staff Impact	None		
Investment Requirement	Under review – c.£10k		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction of visitors to the museum following introduction of charges. - Reputational damage 	<p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An estimation of income of between £80,000 to £100,000 p.a. (in part dependent on VAT exemption) is based upon the halving of visitor numbers from 40,000 p.a. to 20,000. Learning from the wider sector implies the impact to visitor numbers is the same irrespective of the charge so low entry charges would be inadvisable. In mitigation the team is improving signage and adding trails, dress-up activities etc to help improve the visitor offer. 	
Financial Outcomes	£100K revenue 2024/25	What does this mean?	Hollytrees Museum will no longer be a free resource for our communities.

Leisure & Economy Stream: Culture & Heritage Programme

SRO: Frank Hargrave

Project	Natural History Museum	Frank Hargrave
Description	Capital redevelopment of Natural History Museum	
Planned Activity	Securing external funding from NLHF and developing a scheme to conserve the Grade II listed church and redevelop the museum displays	
Key Milestones	Application to NLHF made May 24 NLHF Round one award, including development funding c. Sep 24 Development of designs to RIBA stage 4 Round 2 Application to NLHF c.Oct 25 Round 2 Award and grant from NLHF Spring 26 Project Delivery and Museum reopening c. Autumn 27	
Staff Impact	Limited	
Investment Requirement	£100,000 (£50,000 capital in 24/25 and £50,000 in 25/26 TBC on successful Round 2 application	
Risks and Mitigation	Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of Council funding at a time of stretched resources - Failure to secure NLHF funding - Failure to develop a scheme that meets public expectation 	Mitigation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The church needs significant restoration works. This project could lever in external funds to secure some of this investment as well as redevelop the museum itself. - Significant public consultation already completed
Financial Outcomes	Capital investment from Council to match external funds	What does this mean? The church needs conservation works whilst the museum itself is tired and out of date. This project offers multimillion return to the council's investment

Active and Wellbeing Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	TBC	TBC	£515k
Savings Target	£26K	TBC	£210k
Investment	-	£500k capital	-

Owner: Rory Doyle

Description: To transform the public sector sport and leisure model so that is financially sustainable and contributes to reduction in health inequalities and supports integrated working with system partners in relation to estate and service delivery.

	Project Manager	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Service Model Redesign	Rory Doyle		Discovery to Sep-24	1-year Planning phase	Delivery phase
Interim Transition	Rory Doyle			Medium term transition	
Gladstone	Adam Britton		£20K savings 24-25		
Digi Ticket	Adam Britton		£6K savings 24-25		

- £26k of savings relate to contract negotiations for systems in use within the service with no service impact.
- A staffing restructure currently underway will provide the foundations for community health and wellbeing being at the heart of sports and leisure service delivery.
- The delivery of our new service model is a long-term multi-year programme. We will collaborate with communities to change how our services and teams serve our people, be less dependent on formal offers, and tackle health inequalities to ensure that active wellbeing becomes an integral and valued contributor to the wider health and care system.

Leisure & Economy Stream: Active & Wellbeing Programme

SRO: Rory Doyle

Project	Sport and Leisure Service Review		Adam Britton
Description	As part of our ongoing development of sports and leisure services, we are implementing changes to our team structure to ensure the service is fit for future users and provide opportunity for additional income streams. These changes set the foundations for delivering a new service model to put community health and wellbeing at the heart of the vision and delivery of our sport and leisure service. This new approach increases our presence in the community, participation levels for all user groups in Colchester, greater partnership working with national governing bodies, community groups and schools. In addition, contract negotiations for systems currently in use within the service will deliver £26k savings with no service impact.		
Planned Activity	Staff consultation currently underway.		
Key Milestones	Implementation of new service structure, and recruitment to new roles – from April 2024 Procurement of new equipment – by April 2025 Installation of new equipment - 2025		
Staff Impact	The structure being implemented by April 2024 will largely provide the new roles anticipated for the next three years, however the new ways of working are likely to result in greater effectiveness and efficiencies. Services also may need to be reviewed and refined in response to customer need.		
Investment Requirement	There is a required capital investment in 25/26 of £500k, in addition to other grant monies already being pursued.		
Risks and Mitigation	Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Successful recruitment to team structure - Fluctuating energy and supplier costs - Not achieving income levels needed on memberships 	Mitigation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upskilling where appropriate, use of agency workers - Use different suppliers where we can, aim for lower energy use - A specialist consultant has completed an income analysis with reasonable assumptions has been taken and confidence levels are high. 	
Financial Outcomes	£725k target net budget reduction for 26/27 (£515k income growth, £100k Premises savings from energy efficiencies, £60k employees, £50k between supplies/grants)	What does this mean?	We expect to see a reduction in system spend, a staff restructure which brings efficiencies and increase in income generation. This new health and wellbeing approach will help to tackle health inequalities in our city and mean we are a valued contributor to the wider health and care system.

Economic Growth Programme

Owner: Matt Sterling

Description: Working with partners through the North Essex Economic Board to scope and agree a combined approach to promoting economic growth.

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	TBC	TBC	TBC
Savings Target	TBC	TBC	TBC
Investment	TBC	TBC	TBC

	Project Manager	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Participation in Essex CEOs Forum	Pam Donnelly	Government Autumn Statement	Local party votes		

- This programme builds on several years of joint working through the NEEB and more recently the collaboration through North Essex Councils to produce the Greater Essex Devolution proposal
- It also uses the links that have been built through Team Colchester and One Colchester
- Exploring new ways of working together and sharing resources to increase our impact and resilience

Housing Stream: HRA Review Programme

SRO: Lindsay Barker

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			

Project	Housing Revenue Account Assessment	Lindsay Barker
Description	Review of our Housing offer and delivery model (to be planned in stages over 3 years)	
Planned Activity	Development of a long-term plan to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and the future sustainability of our housing offer, beginning with an assessment and reset of the future use of our Housing Revenue Account.	
Key Milestones	Strategic assessment of the HRA to be planned and commissioned by April 2024 to underpin future plan (timescales for completion TBD)	
Staff Impact (FTE)	No direct impact from the review, although there may be impacts arising from the review	
Investment Requirement	TBC	
Risks and Mitigation	Risk: That the HRA business plan is unsustainable	Mitigation: The review will identify mitigating actions
Financial Outcomes	The aim of the review is to result in a financially viable business plan for the management of our housing stock.	

Housing Stream: Housing Provision Programme

SRO: Philip Sullivan

Project	Homelessness Prevention		Philip Sullivan
Description	Development of a long-term plan to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and the future sustainability of our housing offer, beginning with an assessment and reset of the future use of our Housing Revenue Account.		
Planned Activity	This is an emerging programme of transformation work with activity at various stages of development. The new Housing Board already established and chaired by Rory Doyle connects the Health and Well Being Alliance and will provide better governance and partnership working opportunities. The Housing Delivery Plan will generate additional projects that will be assessed by the new Board arrangements.		
Key Milestones	New approach to strategic oversight of housing functions determined from late Dec-23		
Staff Impact (FTE)	Staff impact currently being scoped as this involves staff across CBH and CCC		
Investment Requirement	TBC		
Risks and Mitigation	Risk: Further increased in homelessness	Mitigation: The review will identify solutions to further increases in homelessness	
Financial Outcomes	£200K savings 2026/27		

Assets Programme

	24-25	25-26	26-27
Income Target	N/A	TBC	TBC
Savings Target	£300K	TBC	TBC
Investment	N/A	TBC	TBC

Owner: Patricia Barry

Description: Develop an Assets strategy aligned to strategic plan and business goals, ensuring property is maintained effectively and that regeneration, climate change and place-making objectives are realised, and commercial and income generation opportunities are promoted. Develop an asset strategy, policy and delivery model that ensure we make the most of our assets.

	Project Manager	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Asset Management Framework	Patricia Barry		Cabinet decision	Delivery	
Corporate Landlord Model	Patricia Barry		TUPE	Service redesign	

There are 2 main focuses of this programme

1. Implementing a Corporate Landlord Model for the planning, creating and operation of assets
2. Creating an Asset Management Framework that includes policy, strategy and a clear plan that enables Colchester to understand and leverage the value of the whole estate, making sound financial and risk-based decisions, in partnership with other organisations

Assets Programme

Savings or income breakdown and detail

- 2024/25 - £300k saving from the design of our Corporate Landlord service.
- Work with services (as part of other programmes within FFF) to identify savings or income generation relating to assets under those programmes according to the gap identified and in line with strategic approach.
- Plan for future years impact – work to begin immediately to understand discovery data and the following opportunities;
 - **Cut spend** – unlikely that this will be in relation to works due to annual under-investment, however:
 - Potential reduction in costs of borrowing if disposals of surplus/cost inefficient properties identified and capital receipt used for reinvestment rather than using capital borrowings
 - Efficiency programme for building usage to reduce/control running costs
 - Review vacant properties and strategic hold assets – there will be costs associated with security etc
 - Strategic investment in properties identified for long term retention to enable use of capital rather than use of revenue in ‘ad-hoc’ approach to spend
 - **Stop income loss:** investment in stock, particularly those that are generating income is essential. Also review marketing of vacant commercial portfolio
 - **Increase income (immediate and future opportunities):** review the use of access to capital in relation to the investment strategy e.g. opportunities for secure income stream from provision of facilities that support health provision – primary care, intermediate housing, community located health provision
 - **Use of capital:** does capital expenditure always support economic growth or lead to reduction in revenue?

Assets Programme

People - current and projected

- Complete picture of property-related staffing numbers is unknown, but a forensic cost analysis of the ledger will identify all resources, including staff numbers, that are involved in estate matters
- The Corporate Landlord structure is in development

Estimating Confidence levels

- High

Key Risks

- The organisation does not consider the current and future risk and cost of the estate through the lens of the financial sustainability of the council (once the relevant data has been gathered and analysed)
- Competing political and operational drivers for capital investment or property related decisions
- Investment is not forthcoming to develop business cases for projects that are specifically linked to revenue reduction or income generation projects e.g. New Crematorium, Energy production - Heat Networks/Solar Farm, Town Hall
- Continuing volatility of the property market will affect assumptions around time, cost, and open market valuations for business cases therefore contingency will need to be included in all cases
- Speed of deterioration of the estate continues to impact on income, unexpected cost and reputational damage

Assets Programme

Next Steps	Status
Implement Corporate Landlord – already approved at Cabinet	In progress
New governance structure to be established to ensure member engagement, transparency of decision making, strategic understanding and planning of the Estate	Implementation from April
Service and organisational engagement regarding culture change that the Corporate Landlord will deliver	Ongoing
Forensic cost analysis of the ledger to provide accurate visibility of costs of the estate	Completion mid-Mar
Commercial estate analysis – risk and identification of opportunities	Completion mid-Mar
Detailed stock condition survey to include 15–20-year life cycle costings to support financial planning beyond the current MTFF	Complete end-Apr
3-year action plan for the estate (developed under delegated authority due to timing of receipt of stock condition data)	Complete mid-May
Any new capital project that negatively impacts the financial liability of CCC, until approval of the Strategic Estate Plan must be exceptional, new gateway process following capital review must be strictly adhered to and wider strategic impact considered as part of the business plan	Ongoing
As per CIPFA recommendations, Estate Plan (Strategy/Policy) drafted, with submission to Scrutiny in February and Cabinet in March	COMPLETE
Develop business cases where there are revenue reduction implications or income generation opportunities only	In progress
Further discussion with Health Care Alliance regarding use of council capital to support projects for secure revenue returns	Ongoing
Integrated working with Amphora events team in relation to the Estate Plan	In progress
Strategic review of all Heritage Assets to be undertaken following receipt of condition surveys	March start

Corporate Stream: Shared Services

SRO: Richard Block

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			✓

Building the resilience of our organisation through shared services. A joint Shared Services Executive Board has been established and a programme director is in place leading the work to fully maximise the benefits we know shared service working can bring. The programme has a clear vision to share 'back office' services across the three councils, including:

- HR
- Revs and Bens
- Finance
- ICT
- PMO (Project Management Office)



**shared
services**

Braintree . Colchester . Epping



Organisational resilience – We all carry numerous vacant posts and find it difficult to recruit the right staff for the future. Working in partnership we can be more resilient by sharing services, sharing key posts, attracting the right people.



Improving capacity and agility – Specialists posts can be shared rather than a reliance upon agency staff and Suppliers. Peaks and troughs in workload can be dealt with through improved capacity and sharing of common processes and policies.



Staff retention and development – There is the opportunity to develop some bigger/challenging roles across the partnership that will underpin our ability to retain key staff. Investing in staff development will be a key part of service design.



Aligning and developing best practice – The co-design of services will enable us to build upon strengths, significantly improve common pain points and lead to a one-off change in delivery through the alignment towards shared service best practice.



Service efficiency – We will co-design more efficient services by designing out pain points whilst at the same time dealing with frustrations of staff with existing service delivery models.



Shaping our own future in Essex – Three strategically aligned partners who can move quickly enough to co-design shared services now. This way we are in control of service delivery models.



Improve the customer journey – This programme presents us with a step-change (one-off) opportunity to co-design services around Customer needs.

Corporate Stream: Shared Services

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
	✓		✓

Additional to the main programme

SRO: Richard Block

Project	Building Control		Andrew Tyrrell
Description	<p>Proposal for a shared management structure with one or more local authorities. Key enabler is to have a high-quality Team Leader beneath a shared Service Manager, freeing the manager to align service operations and best practices, customer relationships, income, budgets, workforce planning, training and development. The right Team Leader could reduce the degree of geographical dependency for this role as they would be engaged daily, locally. Shared management would benefit from shared policies, pricing, systems, and practices and be a key role to take best practices from each local authority and encourage a unified team.</p>		
Planned Activity	Team Leader role currently being advertised for Colchester		
Key Milestones	Recruitment of local Team Leader post		
Staff Impact (FTE)	0.5 FTE Service Manager post		
Risks and Challenges	<p>Risks:</p> <p>Success of shared service management is dependent on ability to recruit a sufficiently experienced Team Leader.</p> <p>Progression timeline dependent on Team Leader recruitment.</p> <p>The arrangement would make people highly desirable to other recruiters</p>	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>Market conditions are uncertain at present, affected by 1-Apr-24 Building Safety Regulator “Registration” requirements</p> <p>IT systems in place at participating authorities, whether cost, lifespan, functionality</p>	
Financial Outcome	£43K savings 2024/25		

Corporate Stream: Future Workforce Programme

SRO: Jess Douglas

Our workforce will be critical to the delivery of the Fit for Future transformation portfolio. Our workforce will need/to be:

- Ready for significant change
- Lean but sustainable
- Inclusive leadership
- Diverse and inclusive
- Agile and resilient
- Highly skilled
- Model our core values and demonstrate personal leadership
- Embrace system working and shared services
- Digitally and data enabled



Future Workforce Programme

SRO: Jess Douglas

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			✓

What this means:

Approach:

Sustainable

Establishment is affordable within the council’s budget; work is achievable, fulfilling, and long hours are not the norm.
 Core workforce, with ability to bring in additional interim capacity and expertise.
 Staff are fulfilled, quality of work life is positive, and needs are being met.

- FFF Change Management Policy Review
- Change Management Leadership Programme
- Service workforce/organisational development plans

Agile and Resilient

Workforce will be supported to adapt and thrive in a constantly changing environment, by focusing on people’s wellbeing, physical and mental health
 Utilising skills and sharing knowledge across the council, systems and partnerships.

- Wellbeing strategy
- Enabling more movement across the council to re-deploy staff where needed and support career aspiration
- Formal mentoring and buddying system

Inclusive

Increased diversity and good representation across the council against each protected characteristic.
 Workforce reflective of our communities
 EDI embedded in every workforce activity

- New EDI Strategy linked to LGA equalities framework
- Reverse mentoring
- EDI KPIs and monitoring

Future Skills

What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means and impact to services

- Skills taskforce to identify future skills
- Skills audit and gap analysis
- L&D plans linked to priorities
- Career pathways
- Digital skills

Future Workforce Programme

SRO: Jess Douglas

What this means:

Leadership

Lead transformation positively and collaboratively understanding and managing the impact of change on people
Continually model the council's core values
Be committed to leading a diverse workforce and promoting inclusion

System working /shared service opportunities

Build on existing and forge new partnerships, work collaboratively to realise the opportunities that shared services can bring; resilience, improving capacity, building relationships, retaining staff, service efficiencies and improved customer journey.

Approach:

- Leadership development programme aligned to strategic priorities, core values and transformation
 - Future leaders' talent management programme
 - New leaders' induction programme
-
- Introduce a framework to support the delivery of future shared services:
 - Business case development, models of delivery, culture development, change process, staff involvement and engagement plan.

Corporate Stream: Digital Customer Programme

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			✓

SRO: Mel Kemp-Salt

Project	Website Replacement Project		
Description	Replace existing extranet, intranet, and microsite platforms at Colchester City and Epping Forest District Council and deliver a platform that is readily usable and adoptable by further partners. Transform website content to provide clear, concise information and simple, consistent self-service options.		
Planned Activity	Project brief is with key stakeholders for contribution		
Key Milestones	<p>Project timeline assessment is expected to deliver the project over 24 months. The expected path to a phased service by service implementation is:</p> <p>03/2024 - Go out to procurement framework (budget/resources agreed)</p> <p>05/2024 - Sign-off procurement and secure delivery partner</p> <p>06/2024 - Develop project requirements and Statement of Works</p> <p>07/2024 - Commence project deliverables</p>		
Staff Impact (FTE)	No expected staff reduction however there may be efficiencies realised in related services.		
Investment Requirement	To be determined through project planning and procurement frameworks		
Risks and Mitigation	<p>Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not able to provide a platform that underpins modern customer expectations If services are unable to engage with the new site redesign and content review then there will be delays in the project completion 	<p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market research indicates this is low risk Early engagement, agreed web standards in line with, workshopping content, re-use of best practice content 	
Financial Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital investment will be required to fund the project 	What does this mean?	Increased web accessibility, better navigation

Corporate Stream: Digital Customer Programme

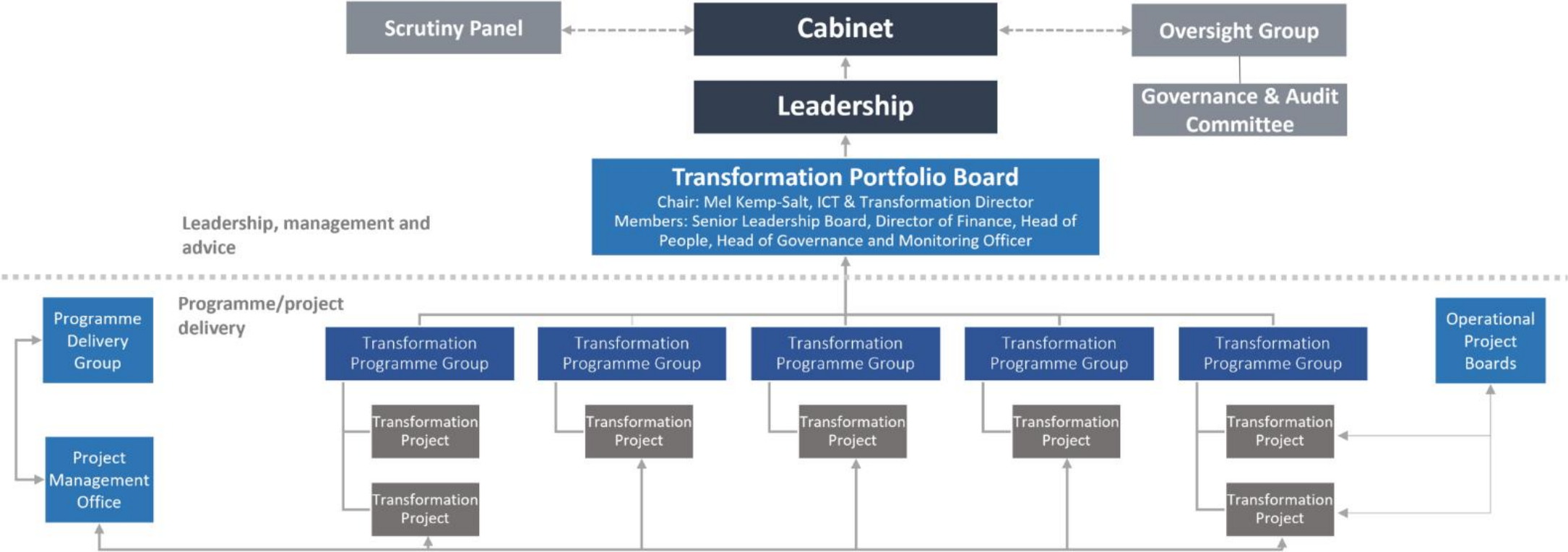
SRO: Mel Kemp-Salt

Efficiency	Cuts	Income	Investment
✓			✓

Project	Channel Experience with Contact Centre		Sam Preston
Description	Reviewing what we do and how we do it to adapt our service to make sure we're fit for the future and meet our customers' needs. This includes reviewing customer journeys to maximise channel shift, which would result in requiring less staff resource and create budget savings in 24/25. This may impact how customers perceive our contact service, with longer response times on the phone however we will work hard to provide better experiences across other digital channels. Future years' service improvement will be dependent on delivery of digital systems.		
Planned Activity	Iterative changes to rebalance the level of service provision across all channels in a test and learn approach, reducing telephony hours to allow better email and self-serve response times and service experience; exploring use of other more efficient digital contact channels; refocus performance indicators and targets away from time taken to first contact resolution; improved use of telephone messaging to direct customers to self-serve options; establish a relationship with Epping customer services to explore options/solutions together.		
Key Milestones	Iterative service adaptations – from January '24 Customer self-serve platforms in place - TBC Web improvements (delivered by the Website Replacement Project) - TBC Redesign the customer service delivery model and optimise alternative contact channels - TBC		
Staff Impact (FTE)	32.58 FTE currently, we expect a reduction of 3-4 FTE that will be achieved through natural attrition and end of fixed term contracts		
Investment Requirement	No specific investment expected, however there will be some dependency on wider projects within digital customer which will require investment		
Risks and Mitigation	Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced customer satisfaction Longer telephony wait times Urgent contacts unable to get through Inability to flex to unexpected demands 	Mitigation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt the changes being made based on customer feedback Reviewing call routing to prioritise more urgent contacts Service design will protect urgent service lines Re-prioritisation of call queues, customer comms as needed 	
Financial Outcomes	£100K net budget reductions 2024/25 achieved through salary savings	What does this mean?	Focusing resources where needed, and improving the experience of our residents interacting with our digital services

Fit for the Future Governance Framework

The proposed governance structure is intended to ensure good governance, with decisions at the lowest level possible and with oversight from Members and Officers at the highest level. In addition to local governance, some programmes will report to other groups, e.g. North Essex Councils.



Transformation Governance Bodies

Governance Body	Chair/Attendees	Purpose	Frequency
Leadership	Leader & Deputy Leader Portfolio Holders Senior Leadership Board	To oversee the delivery of the transformation portfolio and the achievement of its deliverables. Approve the initial portfolio and any additions (or deletions) from it.	As required
Oversight Group	All Group leaders, PfH Economy, Transformation and Performance, Chair Governance & Audit Committee, Senior Leadership Board	To build cross-party discourse, understanding and consensus on the portfolio of transformation programmes including management of risk. To be supported by the Director of ICT & Transformation.	TBC
Transformation Portfolio Board	Chair: Mel Kemp-Salt Vice Chair: Andrew Small, Jess Douglas Senior Leadership Board Andrew Weavers Programme SROs	To review progress on the portfolio and ensure issues and risks are addressed, to hold individual projects to account, provide support and guidance to programme project SROs, to recommend the addition and removal of initiatives from the transformation portfolio, and to ensure that the Council's transformation objectives are met. Also, to provide upward reporting to Members Committees and Groups. Streams/programmes/projects can be reviewed by exception however the Transformation Board may wish to review specific areas of concern or interest as needed.	Monthly
Transformation Programme Groups	Programme SRO Project Manager(s) Relevant Officers	Programme-level groups to identify and define potential transformation projects for further consideration and development.	As required
Transformation Projects	Project Manager Project leads HR & Finance Business Partners	Set up following the identification of transformation opportunities to develop proposals and deliver projects. To be comprised of nominated project manager and leads for the project, along with HR and Finance Business Partners and support from the Project Management Office. To assess the viability of potential transformation projects with a view to establishing business cases and Project Initiation Documents for consideration by the Programme Delivery Board.	Weekly

Transformation Governance Q1 2024

Informal Officer Governance

Senior Leadership Board

Monthly oversight of portfolio

Informal Member Governance

Leadership

Oversight Group

All Group Leaders, PFH for Economy, Transformation and Performance, Chair of Scrutiny Panel, Chair of Governance and Audit Committee

Formal Member Governance

Budget **Scrutiny** 23/01/24

Budget **Cabinet** 24/01/24

FFF **Scrutiny Panel** 13/02/24

Budget **Full Council** 21/02/24

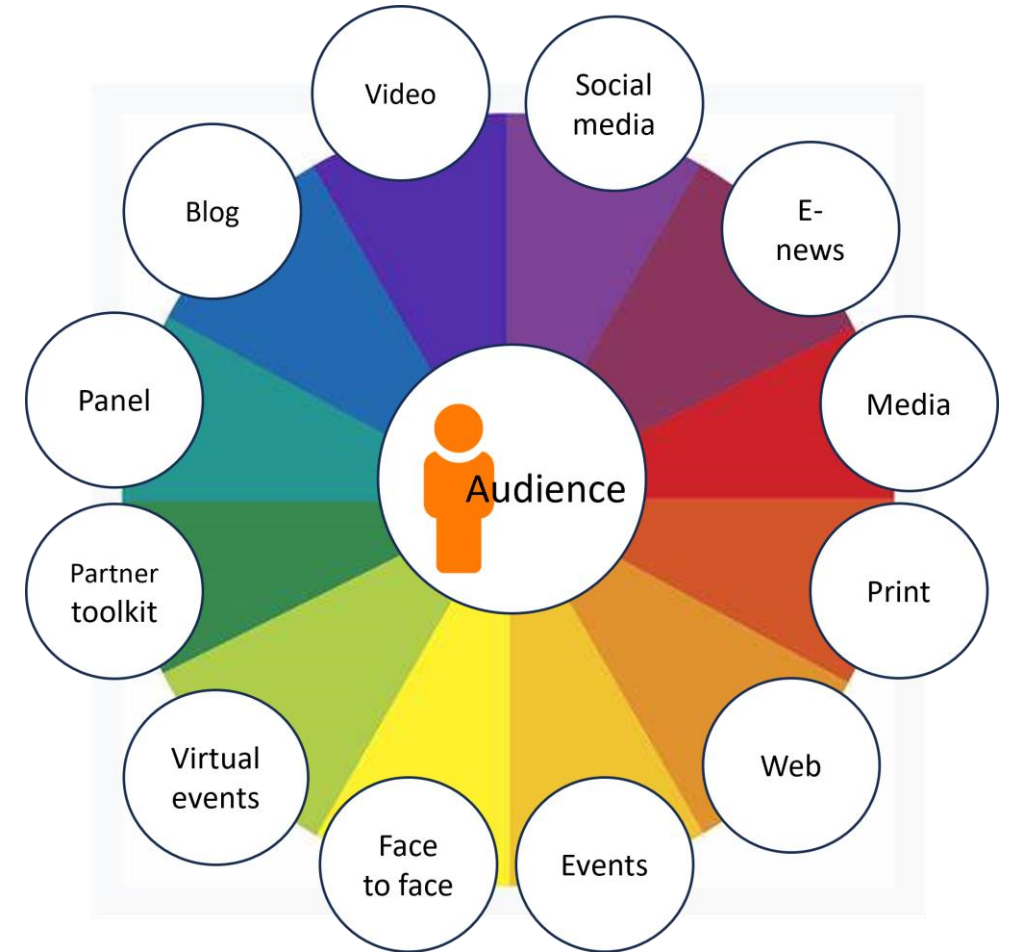
FFF **Scrutiny Panel** 26/02/24

FFF **Cabinet** 13/03/24

Fit for the Future: Integrated Communications Strategy

Integrated communications will ensure we deliver consistent message across channels and to residents, staff, members and stakeholders to support the programme objectives, take people on the Fit for the Future journey with us and build trust and loyalty.

It includes who we are talking to, why we are talking to them, how and when we will talk to them, what form of communication the content should take and what channels we should use to share it.



Fit for the Future: Integrated Communications Strategy

	Key Messages	Approach
External	The budget situation of the organisation, how we are acting through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means and make sure our services are fit for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full communications plan. • Mix of channels appropriate to message, including media, social media, e-news, website and residents’ panel.
Internal	What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means, impact to services and staff, ensuring up to date / timely messages with the ability to ask questions and feed into the process and support for staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full communications plan with monthly focus on work streams. • Mix of channels appropriate to audience e.g. desk based/frontline. • Clear feedback routes.
Members	What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means, impact to services and residents, ensuring up to date and timely messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix of channels appropriate to audience, including networking events, new member induction, regular updates from CEO and Leader and toolkits.
Stakeholders	What changes are happening through the Fit for the Future programme to make sure we are living within our means and impact to services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In person stakeholder briefings for key partners to the council by SLB/SLT/Cabinet • Regular meetings already attended by SLB/SLT/Cabinet.



Cabinet

5 June 2024

Item
8(ii)

Report of	Democratic Services Manager	Author	Richard Clifford ☎ 507832
Title	Appointments to External Organisations and Council Groups		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report proposes appointments to a number of external organisations and Council groups and also provides a number of reports about the work undertaken by appointees to external organisations and Council groups in 2023-24.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The representatives to the various external organisations and Council groups listed in Appendix A be appointed for the 2024-25 municipal year, with such appointments to cease if representatives cease to be members of the Council during the municipal year. At the point of publication a handful of appointments remain to be nominated and an updated Appendix A will be circulated in advance of the Cabinet meeting.
- 2.2 To authorise the Leader of the Council to make a determination, where a nomination is deemed to be in dispute, if a vacancy occurs or if an appointment needs to be made to a new organisation during the course of the municipal year.
- 2.3 To appoint Councillor King as the Council's Armed Forces Champion.
- 2.4 To appoint Councillor Sommers as the Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Champion.
- 2.5 To note the reports about the work undertaken by appointees to external organisations in 2023-24, as set out in Appendix B.

3. Reason for Recommended Decisions

- 3.1 It is important for the Council to continue to make formal appointments to certain organisations and council groups such as those with statutory functions, our key strategic and community partners and groups with joint working arrangements. These groups have been identified in Appendix A.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 No alternative options are proposed. It is proposed to authorise the Leader of the Council to make a determination where a nomination is deemed to be in dispute or if an appointment needs to be made if a vacancy occurs or an appointment needs to be made to a new organisation in the course of the municipal year.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The appointments to the Council 's commercial companies, Colchester Borough Homes and Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd, will now be made through a separate process.
- 5.2 In accordance with the agreed procedure for making appointments to external organisations and council groups, if any seat or vote allocation remains in dispute by the after the appointments have been made by Cabinet, the Leader of the Council can determine the matter.
- 5.3 The Council appoints an Armed Forces Champion whose role is to promote issues relating to the armed force within the Council and to help liaise with the Garrison. It is proposed to appoint Cllr King as Armed Forces Champion.
- 5.4 At its meeting on 19 December 2023, the Cabinet accepted a recommendation from the Policy Panel that consideration be given to the appointment of a Councillor Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion. This arose out of a review by the Panel of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy in November 2023. It is recommended that Councillor Sommers be appointed as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion, as these issues fall within her portfolio.
- 5.5 As a matter of good governance the Council's representatives on outside bodies and Council groups are asked to report on the work they have undertaken as the Council's representative outside body, and the work of the body and the major issues that have been faced in the last municipal year. This should help Cabinet take a value on the appointment. Information about the work of the Council's representatives on a number of the external organisations and Council groups in the 2023-24 municipal year is attached at Appendix B.
- 5.6 The work of some of the organisations to which appointments are made are also reviewed and scrutinised through the work of the Council's Committees and Panels. The work of the Council's commercial companies is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee as the Shareholder Committee of the Council. The Member Development Group also reports annually to Cabinet and a report on their work is included elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Members are entitled to claim travel allowance in respect of attendance at meetings of the external organisations and Council groups to which they have been appointed.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The particular contribution that each of the external organisations and Council groups makes towards the aims of the Strategic Plan is indicated in in Appendix A.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 Members appointed as representatives will be notified accordingly. Confirmation of appointments will be sent to the relevant external organisation and to officer contacts for the various Council groups.

9. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct implications for Equality and Diversity from these appointments and as such a full EQIA has not been deemed necessary. However, the council and all representatives, both officers and members, will encourage and in some cases insist that

our partners have the same approach to equality and diversity as we do and ensure that this is implicit within their policies and procedures.

10. Risk Management Implications

10.1 Councillors fulfilling external and partnership appointments need to have regard to the information and advice contained within the 'Guidance for Members on Outside Bodies.

11. Health, Well-being and Community Safety, Environmental and Sustainability and Health and Safety Implications

11.1 No direct implications, however the appointments to outside bodies listed within this report enable the Council to better address issues within these areas.

Appendices

Appendix A – Appointments to External Organisations and Council Groups 2024-25

Appendix B – Reports on Appointments to External Organisations and Council Groups 2023-2024

Organisation	Representatives for 2024-25	Role of the Representative and Voting Capacity	Contact Name and Address	Compliance with the Strategic Plan
<p>Local Government Association, General Assembly</p> <p>[Local Government Association dealing with all aspects of local government]</p> <p>[Meetings are held in June/July and December at 2pm. The meeting in June/July is held at the annual conference venue and the December meeting in London]</p>	<p>Leader of the Council Cllr King</p> <p>Substitute member: Cllr Cory</p> <p>Observers: Group leaders: Cllr J. Young, Cllr Dundas, Cllr Kirkby-Taylor</p>	<p>Representative is a member of the general assembly and has a voting right (if more than one member is appointed there remains only one voting right)</p>	<p>Fatima A S de Abreu Member Services Assistant Local Government Association 18 Smith Square Westminster London SW1P 3HZ Direct line: 0207 664 3136 fatima.deabreu@local.gov.uk</p>	<p>Relevant to all strategic priorities</p>

East of England Local Government Association	Leader of the Council, Cllr King Substitute member, Cllr Cory	Policy and Secretariat Manager East of England Local Government Association West Suffolk House West Way Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP33 3YU 01284 758321 07920 257935 info@eelga.gov.uk	Relevant to most strategic priorities
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<p>Essex Waste Partnership</p> <p>The Essex Waste Partnership includes Essex County Council and the 12 district and city councils. The Essex Waste Partnership was set up to ensure cost-efficient and sustainable waste management is delivered across the county and Southend. The Essex Waste Partnership Board will be responsible for the development and steering of all pan Essex waste management partnership working including, but not limited to: strategic planning, financial framework, strategic investment, optimisation and joint working, communication and education.</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Waste, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Cllr Goss</p> <p>Substitute member: Cllr Scordis</p>		<p>Essex County Council Democratic Services Legal and Assurance Corporate and Customer Services</p> <p>democratic.services@essex.gov.uk</p> <p><u>Officer Contact:</u> Rosa Tanfield Group Manager – Neighbourhood Services</p> <p>rosa.tanfield@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Respond to the climate emergency.</p> <p>Deliver modern services for a modern city</p>
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<p>North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee</p> <p>To develop and implement a joint parking service for North Essex including Braintree, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Tendring and Uttlesford.</p> <p>Joint Parking Committee providing parking services across North Essex, parking management and the power to make new parking restrictions.</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Waste, Neighbourhoods and Leisure: Cllr Goss</p> <p>Substitute member; Cllr Cory</p>	<p>To receive reports, participate in discussions and to raise issues of concern to this Council, one executive member able to vote.</p>	<p>Mel Rundle, Head of Sustainability</p> <p>Partnership Officer contact:- Richard Walker Parking Partnership Group Manager, 01206 282708 www.parkingpartnership.org parking@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Respond to the climate emergency</p> <p>Deliver Modern Services for a Modern City</p>
<p>Essex County Travellers Unit (ECTU) - a partnership with Essex County Council, Police, Fire Brigade and other local authorities</p> <p>The aim of the ECTU is to deliver an efficient, effective and consistent approach to service provision across the county.</p> <p>The unit fulfils the council's responsibilities for gypsies/ travellers.</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Communities, Heritage and Public Protection – Cllr Sommers</p>	<p>To sit on the ECTU partnership board. If action requires a vote then this would be to determine a recommendation to the authorities. The representative will then take the recommendation through the appropriate decision making process. There is one vote per member authority</p>	<p>Paul Ashworth Wellbeing, Place and Communities Lead incorporating the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Wellbeing, Public Health and Communities paul.ashworth@essex.gov.uk Lync: 0333 0136694</p> <p>Colchester City Council – Andrew Tyrrell</p>	<p>Improve health, well-being and happiness</p>

<p>One Colchester Partnership Systems Leadership Strategic Group</p> <p>Aimed at joining up systems leaders across Health & Wellbeing, Safety and Economy to support improvement and systems approach to problem solving.</p>	<p>Leader of the Council, Cllr King</p>		<p>Rory Doyle, Associate Director, Integrated Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>Rory.doyle@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Improve health, well-being and happiness</p> <p>Grow our economy so everyone benefits</p>
<p>Colchester and Ipswich Joint Museums Committee</p> <p>To develop and implement a joint museum service for Colchester and Ipswich</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Communities, Heritage and Public Protection: Councillor Sommers</p> <p>Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Transformation: Cllr Jay</p>		<p>Frank Hargrave, CIMS Manager</p> <p>frank.hargrave@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Celebrate our city, our culture and heritage</p>

<p>Dedham Vale (AONB) and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee</p> <p>[Partnership project funded by local authorities and DEFRA</p> <p>[Meetings held 2 or 3 times a year at various times and venues throughout the Stour Valley area. Additional meetings and workshops as necessary.]</p>	<p>Cllr Luxford Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability</p> <p>One further appointment to be made by the Conservative Group</p>	<p>Representatives are involved in steering the work of the project and in particular matters affecting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Representatives are able to vote.</p>	<p>AONB Manager, Simon Amstutz Address: AONB Office, Dock Lane, Melton, Suffolk IP12 1PE Dedham Vale (AONB) and Stour Valley Project c/o Suffolk County Council Endeavour House 8 Russell Road Ipswich IP1 2BX Telephone: 01394 445225</p> <p>E:mail Dedhamvale.project@suffolk.gov.uk</p> <p>Officer contact – Lucy Massey, Tel: 1206 508779</p>	<p>Celebrate our city, our culture and heritage</p>
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<p>Colchester Arts Centre</p>	<p>Cllr M. Spindler</p>		<p>Anthony Roberts Director Colchester Arts Centre Church Street Colchester Essex CO1 1NF</p> <p>anthony@colchesterartscentre.com</p> <p>Officer contact – Claire Taylor, Visitor and Cultural Services Team Leader - T 01206 282920 Claire.taylor@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Celebrate our city, our culture and heritage.</p>
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<p>Firstsite</p>	<p>Cllr Goss</p>		<p>Sally Shaw Director Lewis Gardens High Street Colchester CO1 1JH</p> <p>sally@firstsite.uk</p> <p>Copy in Sandra MacDonald</p> <p>sandra@firstsite.uk</p> <p>Officer contact – Claire Taylor, Visitor and Cultural Services Team Leader - T 01206 282920 Claire.taylor@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Celebrate our city, our culture and heritage</p>
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<p>Mercury Theatre Limited</p> <p>[Limited Company and Charity running an arts repertory company]</p> <p>[Meetings held every 4-6 weeks at 6pm at the Mercury Theatre]</p>	<p>Cllr T. Young</p>	<p>Representatives act as Directors who are able to participate fully in the meetings and vote</p>	<p>Steve Mannix Interim Executive Director Mercury Theatre Balkerne Gate Colchester CO1 1PT</p> <p>Steve.Mannix@mercurytheatre.co.uk</p> <p>Officer contact – Claire Taylor, Visitor and Cultural Services Team Leader - T 01206 282920 Claire.taylor@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Celebrate our city, our culture and heritage</p>
<p>'Our Colchester' Business Improvement District (BID) Board</p> <p>The Board provides strategic direction over the Limited company that operates Colchester Town Centre BID. The BID works to advance the interests and prospects of the Town Centre for the benefit of the residents and Businesses of the City and Town.</p>	<p>Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy– Cllr King</p> <p>Substitute member: Cllr Pearson</p>	<p>The Councillor is an observer on the Board</p>	<p>Chair of the Board, Our Colchester BID, C/O Management Suite, Culver Square Shopping Centre, Culver Square, 9A Culver Street, CO11 1JQ.</p> <p>Officer Contact Mandy Jones Strategic Director mandy.jones@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Grow our economy so everyone benefits</p>

<p>Member Development Group</p> <p>Council Group constituted to assist in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of member development strategies.</p>	<p>Portfolio for Economic Growth and Transformation: Cllr Jay</p> <p>One representative from each Group Cllr Harris Nominations from other Groups to follow</p>		<p>Richard Clifford, Democratic Services Manager</p> <p>richard.clifford@colchester.gov.uk 01206 507832</p>	<p>Supports members to meet all strategic priorities</p>
<p>Police and Crime Panel</p> <p>The Panel will be responsible for scrutinising and supporting the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner, who in turn is responsible for holding the Chief Constable to account.</p>	<p>Cllr Cox</p> <p>Substitute member: Cllr Harris</p>		<p>Sophie Champion Senior Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Democracy and Transparency Corporate and Customer Services</p> <p>Essex County Council Email: sophie.champion2@essex.gov.uk www.essex.gov.uk Telephone: 03330 131642</p>	<p>Deliver modern services for a modern city</p>

<p>Bradwell Local Communities Liaison Council Independent, local community body acting as a liaison between with local organisations on matters arising from the operation/management of the Bradwell Power Station site.</p>	<p>Portfolio for Planning, Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Luxford Vaughan</p>	<p>Full voting rights Meets twice a year Steeple Village Hall, Garden Fields, Steeple, Southminster, Essex CM0 7JY, 9.30 for 10am</p>	<p>Cathryn Pritchard Bradwell LCLC Secretariat cathryn.m.pritchard@magnoxsites.com Officer contact: Sandra Scott, Place Strategy Manager Sandra.scott@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Respond to the climate emergency Deliver modern services for a modern city</p>
<p>Town Deal Board (We Are Colchester) We Are Colchester is a partnership of councils, businesses and voluntary groups which has been established to put together a bid for Government Towns Fund cash.</p>	<p>Leader of the Council, Cllr King</p>	<p>Voting representative</p>	<p>Simon Thorp Town Deal Project Manager Simon.Thorp@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Grow our economy so everyone benefits</p>

<p>North Essex Economic Board NEEB</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Transformation– Cllr Jay</p>	<p>As Portfolio Holder incorporating Economic development to represent the Council on this North Essex group of authorities seeking to advance the economic potential of the locality. Has one vote on a Board of six District Authorities and also including Essex County Council</p> <p>Board meets quarterly.</p>	<p>Matthew Sterling Head of Economic Growth matthew.sterling@colchester.gov.uk</p> <p>Karen Turnbull Economic Strategy Specialist Karen.turnbull@colchester.gov.uk</p>	<p>Grow our economy so everyone benefits</p>
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<p>Local Highway Panel</p>	<p>Cllr Lilley, Luxford Vaughan</p> <p>Nominations from Conservative and Green groups to follow</p>	<p>The City Council can nominate 4 members to the Local Highway Panel.</p> <p>All County Councillors with exception of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and the Leader of the Council will be voting members of the respective Local Highway Panel.</p> <p>The LHP is accountable for:</p> <p>Recommending the annual LHP programme for submission to the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure.</p> <p>Documenting highways issues raised by residents and the community in its area, so that the concerns can be</p>	<p>Jon Simmons, Highway Liaison Officer – (Chelmsford and Colchester Local Highway Panel)</p> <p>jon.simmons@essexhighways.org</p> <p>www.essex.gov.uk/highways</p>	<p>Respond to the Climate Emergency</p> <p>Deliver modern services for a modern city</p>
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		investigated and the possibility of addressing these through engineering solutions can be validated.		
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<p>Tendring Colchester Border Garden Community Joint Committee</p> <p>The Joint Committee was established by Tendring District Council (TDC), Colchester City Council (CBC) and Essex County Council (ECC) in relation to the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community (TCBGC). The Joint Committee's remit is to jointly discharge those specific executive and non-executive functions related to TCBGC, delegated pursuant to Sections 101(5), 102(1)(b) and 102(2) of the Local Government Act 1972. There are two main themes, namely:</p> <p>(i) To exercise the Council's functions relating to overseeing the preparation of the joint TCBGC Development Plan Document.</p> <p>(ii) To act as local planning authority to determine planning applications by virtue of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, within the TCBGC area.</p>	<p>Cllrs King, Luxford Vaughan and J. Young</p>	<p>Colchester City Council members have full voting powers.</p>	<p>Ian Ford iford@tendringdc.gov.uk 01255 686584</p>	<p>Deliver homes for those most on need</p>
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Appendix B

Report on Work on Outside Bodies 2023-24

Outside Body	Representatives	No of Meetings attended 23-24	Purpose of the Group	Work in 2023/24	Issues Arising
North Essex Parking Partnership	Cllr Goss	3	Provide oversight of parking policy, operations and finance. To decide budget, parking schemes and fees and charges for on-street parking in North Essex	Decided budget, updates in policy, implementation recovery plan, decided parking schemes, and fees and charges across North Essex.	Spotlight had been on finances since dipping into deficit since the pandemic in the prior financial year. Recovery plan in place has shown significant improvement in financial position of the Partnership.

<p>National Landscapes (previously AONB) Combined Joint Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Cllr Luxford Vaugan, Cllr Laws Officer: Lucy Massey, who provided this report</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>To protect and regenerate the designated area</p>	<p>Distributed £100,000 in grants for AONB purpose from funds provided by section 106 agreements, donations and DEFRA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed over £450,000 of Farming in Protected Landscapes grants (subject to final panel approvals). • Rebranded both AONBs as National Landscapes. • Published two outstanding AONB newspapers with a combined print run of 40,000. • Ran a Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Forum that attracted over 60 delegates (in person and online). • Continued delivery of £657,000 of National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative Projects across both National Landscapes. • Responded to 2 national level planning consultations. • Made two 'National Landscape' awards for individuals that made an outstanding contribution to the areas. • Engaged in 5 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project development processes. 	<p>There are roughly 3-4 meetings to attend per annum; I took on the position of CCC representative in Feb 2024 therefore I have attended 1 meeting to date. My role is to ensure the funding that CCC contribute to the National Landscape Team is being invested into work that the Council are agreeable with and communicate information that may be of value from the Council to the Committee and visa versa. For example, at the</p>
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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Network projects delivered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1km new anti-predator fencing to protect waders. • Over 5,000 giant hogweed plants removed. • Himalayan balsam cleared in patches along 4km of river. • 2km of new footdrain habitats created for waders. • 4 wader scrapes created. • 3km of new hedgerows planted. • 3.5 hectares of Ancient semi-natural woodland restored. • 0.5 hectares of reedbed created. • 1.5 hectares of lowland meadow restored. • Appointed & hosted an externally funded 'New to Nature' Nature Network Assistant role. • Hosted an externally funded Seasonal Ranger. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted an online webinar on hedgehogs. • Delivered a Heritage National Lottery Heritage Funded project to increase participation & understanding of National Landscapes. 	<p>upcoming meeting I will present details of the Local Plan Review and request input on this. Please note the team work across both the Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley and Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape.</p>
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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated volunteer activity to deliver over 1,000 volunteer workdays. • Facilitated 2 National Landscape Volunteer Training Days, Outdoor First Aid and Geology. • National Landscape Facebook accounts reached more than 800,000 people. 	
Colchester and Ipswich Museums Joint Committee	Cllr Burrows	2	Oversight of the Joint Museums Service	The Joint Museums Committee oversees the management of the museums in Colchester + Ipswich.	None
Mercury Theatre	Cllr Barton	Six official meetings but several meet ups to discuss on going issues	To provide challenging highly professional productions; to encourage and support new talent ; to provide a welcoming accessible space which is inclusive to all.	Since the Arts Council investment the theatre has gone from strength to strength. Stagetext relocated from London providing sub titles for audiences meaning the theatre is even more accessible . The Council has benefitted from this service at our Full Council meetings. We have secured extra funding to build a much needed extension and work on designs etc is quite advanced. We have installed LED lighting and digital equipment so the	I am concerned about the impact of Charter Hall offering a similar programme to the Mercury. The main concern is Elf and the impact it may have on the Mercury pantomime. As you know the money raised from the

				<p>theatre can live stream. We continue to support and mentor new playwrights and enable their plays to be showcased. The theatre has been awarded theatre of sanctuary status and a safe space for anyone who feels marginalised or persecuted. It has been a privilege to work with such a competent forward thinking team</p>	<p>pantomime (the highest earning show of the year) enables the Mercury to invest in young creatives and offer experiences to many residents whether it be through classes , new shows, outreach work . It is a concern for the Board</p>
<p>We Are Colchester (Town Deal) Board</p>	<p>Cllr King</p>	<p>4 (out of 4 meetings)</p>	<p>The purpose of the Board is to deliver a successful Town Deal strategy, vision, and Town Investment Plan to government, for Colchester. And to act as the governance body responsible for making decisions and monitoring progress of all Town Deal programme and project initiatives, in partnership with the Department for</p>	<p>The Board considered, brought challenge to, and ultimately supported the transition of Town Deal projects from Planning to Delivery (Development and Deployment) phase. The Board also acted as a consultee for other emerging opportunities including Levelling Up Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and City Centre Master Plan.</p>	<p>Good progress has been made, and welcomed, with some adjustments to scope and schedule in response to challenging market and delivery conditions. Board membership has been reviewed. A number of</p>

			Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).		projects have been successfully completed and others are underway.
East of England Local Government Association	Cllr King	9	To advocate for and support member councils, to promote our interests and that of our region, and our residents. to foster co-operation and best practice.	Support of EELGA and their advocacy, meeting with fellow leaders, participating in their policy and others discussions.	None
Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Joint Committee	Cllr King	7	To oversee the planning for and progress towards the delivery of the Tendring Colchester Borders garden community.	Working with Joint Committee colleagues to ensure continued progress towards the garden community. To support our officers. In their work, through consultation, and review with partners, towards the Planning Inspector's Examination of our joint Development Plan.	None

5th June 2024

Report of	Head of Neighbourhood Services	Author	Robert Doran
Title	Adoption of Fleet Strategy		
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In December 2020, the Environment & Sustainability Panel endorsed a new Fleet Transition Plan (Appendix A). This Plan set out a program for the transition of the Council’s diesel fleet to a zero-carbon fleet by 2030 in line with the Council’s Climate Emergency Action Plan. With the introduction of a small number of electric vehicles to the Council’s fleet and the trial of alternative lower emission fuels while industry is continuing to develop, Officers wanted to update this transition Plan and formulate a Fleet Strategy.
- 1.2 This Strategy (Appendix B) was formulated using extracts from the Fleet Transition Plan 2020 alongside new information that was gathered from fleet manufacturers, other local authorities and third-party critical friends including the Energy Savings Trust. The Strategy is now more up to date and explores some of the options that the Council can take in the future to achieve a carbon neutral tailpipe fleet.
- 1.3 The Environment & Sustainability Panel, at its meeting on 21 March 2024, agreed to recommend to Cabinet the implementation of the Strategy as per the report, with the following addition:
 - That when selecting suppliers of vehicles, due regard is given to the environmental, employment and human rights standards in place at the point of manufacture of substantial components (those components representing greater than 25% of the market cost of the vehicle), including battery technology, of the vehicle which is being procured.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To approve the Fleet Strategy in line with the recommendations made by the Environment & Sustainability Panel.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 With current technology continuing to develop in the world of batteries and alternative fuels, Council Officers continue to work with vehicle manufacturers, other local authorities and third-party critical friends including the Energy Savings Trust to test the market by way of trialling alternative fleet options.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 An alternative option would be to remain with the current Fleet Transition Plan however, with technology advancing year on year regarding alternative fuels and batteries, having a more robust and up to date Strategy will put the Council in a better position when making informed decisions regarding the procurement and management of their fleet.

5 Background Information

- 5.1 At its meeting of 17 December 2020, the Environment & Sustainability Panel endorsed a Fleet Transition Forward Plan (Appendix A) that set out to deliver a rolling replacement programme of electric/hybrid vehicles as the diesel vehicles came to their end-of-life span. It was set out that the Council's fleet is used to deliver a range of important and front-line services, including Neighbourhood Services, Pest Control, and the Helpline Service. The Council has a responsibility to ensure that all fleet complies with national standards, is adequate in terms of capacity, reliable, and is fit for purpose to deliver against the agreed outcomes for the service. At the time of the report, the Council's Strategic Plan for 2020/23 prioritised tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability, with a key goal to improve air quality and reduce the Council's direct carbon emissions to achieve a net zero carbon footprint by 2030. The Climate Emergency Action Plan identified that the Council's fleet was accounting for, approximately 22% of its total emissions in 2019/20. As the grid continues to decarbonise, it was reported that the emissions from the Council's fleet would become an increasingly larger portion of the overall footprint. The Plan therefore proposed to take a phased approach to renewing the fleet as new technologies and associated infrastructure became available.
- 5.2 Since ratification of the Plan, the Council has made strides towards the goals set out by introducing a small number of electric vehicles to its fleet. Concurrently, it began trialling alternative lower emission fuels, reflecting the ongoing developments in the industry. Recognising the dynamic nature of the industry and the evolving options for sustainable transportation, the Council's Officers have sought to update the Plan and formulate a comprehensive Fleet Strategy.
- 5.3 The new Strategy (Appendix B) was formulated using key insights from the Fleet Transition Plan 2020. It also incorporated new information gathered from various sources, including fleet manufacturers, other local authorities, and third-party critical friends such as the Energy Savings Trust. This approach ensured that the Strategy was informed by a broad range of perspectives and up-to-date industry knowledge. The updated Strategy is more comprehensive and current, exploring some of the potential pathways that the Council can pursue in the future. The Strategy serves as a roadmap for the Council's transition to a more sustainable fleet, aligning with its broader commitment to environmental responsibility.
- 5.4 In February 2024 Officers presented this new Strategy to the Environment & Sustainability Panel. During this meeting the Panel explored various aspects of the Strategy, and it was agreed that Officers would be given the opportunity to present more information at the next Environment & Sustainability Panel in March 2024. Aspects explored:
- An explanation of the 'tipping point' beyond which our use of electric vehicles would require us to install a sub-station at Shrub End
 - Need to know the whole life cycle of batteries and vehicles.
 - Check the current cost of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) and diesel.
 - Check the cost per mile for the fuel types listed on page 39 of the agenda.
 - Provide more detail in the Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the Council's procurement social value indicators.
 - The carbon intensity of grid electricity (powering a battery electric vehicle (BEV)) versus the carbon intensity of internal combustion engine vehicles.
 - Vehicle retention
 - Manufacturing of vehicles

- 5.5 In March 2024 Officers presented a further report to the Environment & Sustainability Panel to further inform the Panel on the aspects of the Strategy they wished to explore. The Panel expressed satisfaction with the information provided and proposed an additional recommendation to be presented to Cabinet. The recommendation was articulated as follows:

‘That when selecting suppliers of vehicles, due regard is given to the environmental, employment and human rights standards in place at the point of manufacturers of substantial components (those representing greater than 25% of the market cost of the vehicle), including battery technology, of the vehicle which is being procured.’

- 5.4 In response to this recommendation, it is confirmed that as part of every tender process, the Council poses questions pertaining to the environment and human rights, specifically in relation to modern slavery. While Officers do not delve into the specifics of components such as batteries, questions posed can be modified to encompass this aspect in the future. When the Council employs frameworks, it cannot assure that these questions are posed. However, moving forward, the Council can instruct the framework providers submit these specific questions.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 Through the Council’s Procurement Strategy, Officers will ensure that all procurement and purchasing documentation recognises, understands, and supports the Council’s policies with regards to equal opportunities, diversity, and human rights.
- 6.2 The Council is committed to ensuring equality in its procurement processes. As part of this commitment. The Social Value Portal is utilised for relevant contracts, enabling bidders to propose targets that align with the Colchester Themes, Outcomes, and Measures (TOMs) framework. This framework is a comprehensive set of measures designed to assess the social value of a contract.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 Fleet operations are a key element of the way the Council delivers its services to residents and businesses and therefore underpins much of the activity that will deliver against the strategic priorities. The proposal directly links to the vision, themes, and objectives of the Strategic Plan 2023-26 – A City Fit for the Future: Respond to the climate emergency.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Frontline staff and service managers involved in the operational management of core services that require vehicles will be consulted and will continue to be involved at all stages of the procurement and selection process to ensure that vehicles are fit for purpose and appropriate.
- 8.2 Demonstration electric vehicles will continue to be tested with teams and feedback received will be considered.
- 8.3 Continued networking with other Local Authorities that have tried and tested alternatives to diesel fuelled vehicles will be made to gain real world knowledge in how these vehicles perform over a long period.

8.4 Officers consulted with Nottingham City Council to obtain their experience in introducing and maintaining fully electric vehicles (EVs) over the past ten years. Their experience showed the following:

Battery (including battery management) technology is improving rapidly as it is the single largest cost in many electric vehicles and the aspect which has the largest scope for development and thereby efficiency improvements and financial savings. Consequently, the last seven years has seen a huge increase in the average range of batteries without a corresponding increase in weight or cost. A larger, but often unseen, improvement has been made in battery management for example with the cooling systems employed – many batteries are now liquid cooled, and these could be reasonably be anticipated to last 20+ years.

As well as these improvements in the EVs coming off the production line, advances have also been made to tackle the 1 million EVs already on UK roads. Some options trialled by Nottingham City Council (NCC):

- Repair – battery refurbishment tools which NCC have utilised to restore seven-year-old batteries from a maximum range of 35-40 miles back to 71-80 miles.
- Reuse – we have installed two containers which, in total, are filled with 48 batteries which were previously in Renault Kangoo's and came to the end of their usable life in the vehicles but still have around 720kWh capacity which is sufficient for our purposes.
- Replace – we are working with a Scottish company on a new method of replacing old EV batteries with new ones which have the latest technology. We are hoping to change the batteries in two of our 2016 Nissan Leaf's to the larger, liquid cooled batteries which would likely see the battery outlasting the vehicle.

8.5 Motor vehicle manufacturers tend to be substantial organisations and it is not in their interests to be associated with illegal or unsustainable methods of vehicle manufacturer. In the past it was often quoted that there was element of child labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo being used by electric vehicle battery manufacturer supply chains. Current production methods with rare trace minerals and materials are being sourced from across the globe. In December 2023, [this](#) report concluded that there is "little doubt that resource extraction will be significantly lower for electric cars compared with their petrol or diesel equivalents as recycling increases.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 The introduction of EV and hybrid fleet vehicles is a demonstration of the Council's commitment to tackling the Climate Emergency and demonstrates positive progress on the journey to being net zero carbon for Council operations by 2030. Public communications will reflect this commitment when new vehicles come on board.

9.2 The vehicle fleet underpins many of the Council's core frontline teams and is a highly visible asset out in communities supporting services that benefit residents, local businesses, and visitors to Colchester. Livery will be attached to the vehicles as appropriate.

10. Financial implications

10.1 A fleet replacement programme is in place and will require capital investment in the future per the programme. As set out in the Strategy, careful consideration and business cases will be devised for any replacement vehicles to determine the most appropriate

type of vehicle to purchase. Additionally, through the procurement process, due consideration will be given to the comparison and value for money provided by outright purchase or leasing. There will be no impact on the already approved capital programme.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 Less tailpipe emissions from the Council's fleet will have health benefits not only for staff but for the public. As recycling collection vehicles service each property within the city, reduced or no tail pipe emission will be welcomed. With fully electric vehicles the driving experience for a driver and crew where applicable is more pleasant due to a quieter driving experience.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 The Council has a corporate responsibility to ensure that all fleet and transport operations comply with national standards.

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 The Council will seek to mitigate against any potential risks by following a compliant procurement process and ensure contingency Plans are in place for any failure of vehicles that may impact on core services.

13.2 Without these vehicles it would make it difficult for the Council to undertake its duties under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 The consideration of environmental and sustainability implications of the decision being taken is set out in the table below:

Sustainability theme	Positive environmental impact	Neutral impact/ Not applicable	Negative environmental impact	What are the positive and negative impacts on carbon reduction / environment?	How will positive impacts be enhanced/ encouraged? And negative impacts minimized or
Energy	Y			<p>Positive impacts are reducing tailpipe emissions as the Council transitions to a fully electric / Hydrogen or alternative fuel in the short term.</p> <p>Switching to electric vehicles will increase electricity use but</p>	<p>Introducing an electric fleet to the Council will enhance our goal to be carbon neutral by 2030.</p> <p>Communications can be shared throughout Colchester showing residents and businesses the</p>

Sustainability theme	Positive environmental impact	Neutral impact/ Not applicable	Negative environmental impact	What are the positive and negative impacts on carbon reduction / environment?	How will positive impacts be enhanced/ encouraged? And negative impacts minimized or
				using electricity will have less emissions associated with it than diesel production and use.	commitment to making Colchester a cleaner environment for both residents and visitors.
Waste				At the end-of-life stage for electric vehicles, batteries are being repurposed for electricity storage or recycled, with raw materials such as lithium and nickel being reclaimed for use in new battery production. Advances in battery technology, particularly in battery management systems and cooling mechanisms, have led to substantial improvements in efficiency and cost-effectiveness without added weight or expense. These enhancements, such as the adoption of liquid cooling systems, suggest a potential lifespan of over twenty years for modern batteries.	N/A
Procurement	Y			Procurement will follow the Council rules. Services will be involved in vehicles requirements and specifications before decisions are made to procure. The fleet Strategy shows a criterion before vehicles are purchased which includes if a vehicle is required, what size vehicle is required and if there is a more	

Sustainability theme	Positive environmental impact	Neutral impact/ Not applicable	Negative environmental impact	What are the positive and negative impacts on carbon reduction / environment?	How will positive impacts be enhanced/ encouraged? And negative impacts minimized or
				environmentally friendly alternative option.	
Biodiversity and green spaces		Y		N/A	N/A
Transport	Y			<p>Within the Fleet Strategy services will be asked to ensure the following principles are agreed and considered at each stage,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the data systems in place to track, monitor and evaluate the fleet. • Undertake robust evaluation of operational need and financial viability. • Challenge the number and size of vehicles. • Explore both lease hire and purchasing options, considering existing budgets. • Base decisions on expert recommendations and guidance 	The Council continues to view all future fleet requirements and looks to procure vehicles producing less greenhouse gas emissions.
Adaption		Y		n/a	n/a
Water			Y	The mining of materials for electric vehicles does use a large amount of water which is difficult to mitigate.	n/a
Digital		Y		A majority of the fleet will be fitted with telematics to monitor fleet journeys and determine efficiency of trips.	n/a
Community	Y			Positive impacts on a carbon emission reduced fleet, alongside other benefits such as reduced noise and improved local air quality	

Sustainability theme	Positive environmental impact	Neutral impact/ Not applicable	Negative environmental impact	What are the positive and negative impacts on carbon reduction / environment?	How will positive impacts be enhanced/ encouraged? And negative impacts minimized or
				The Council will be role-modelling and may demonstrate to others action they can take to reduce their environmental impact	
Housing/ Development		Y		n/a	n/a
Carbon Emissions saving	Y			Transitioning the fleet to alternative lower emission fuels or electric vehicles will have a positive impact on the environment including staff and residents. Although the carbon emissions associated with mining materials for electric vehicles are high, the lifetime emissions of using electric vehicles over fossil fuel alternatives is lower.	A continued vehicle replacement cycle will factor in low carbon emission vehicles at every stage.

Appendices

Appendix A Fleet Transition Forward Plan 2020 [General Report \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)

Appendix B Fleet Strategy 2024 [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)

Background Papers

Environment & Sustainability report February 2024 [General Report \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)

Environment & Sustainability report March 2024 [General Report \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)



Colchester
City Council



Colchester City Council: Fleet Strategy 2023

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Abbreviations

Battery electric vehicles

BEV

Carbon dioxide equivalent

Climate Emergency Action Plan

Colchester City Council

Electric vehicle

Electric refuse collection vehicle

Hydrotreated vegetable oil

Internal combustion engine

North Essex Parking Partnership

Refuse Collection Vehicle

Street Care & Safety

CO₂e

CEAP

CCC

EV

eRCV

HVO

ICE

NEPP

RCV

SC&S

State of charge	SoC
Tank To Wheel	TTW
Ultra-low emission vehicles	ULEV
Well To Tank	WTT
Whole life costs	WLC

1. Introduction

This document is to set out the strategy for the council's fleet to move to a carbon neutral fleet by 2030 if operationally and commercially viable. This is in line with the council's commitment to tackle the climate emergency, which was declared in July 2019 and is set out in the [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) (CEAP)

By 2030 the council's ambition is to transition to a fully tail pipe carbon neutral fleet. During this programme diesel and petrol vehicles will be replaced, where practicable, with alternatively fuelled vehicles including but not limited to electric vehicles (EV), Hydrogen vehicles and low emission alternative fuels.

The CEAP identifies the council's fleet as accounting for approximately 25% of its total emissions. As the grid continues to decarbonise and purchased electricity becomes 'greener', emissions from the council's fleet will become an increasingly larger portion of the overall footprint. An action from the CEAP is to take a phased approach to renewal of the fleet as new technologies and associated infrastructure become available.

The objective of this strategy is to ensure that all possible alternative fuelled vehicles on the market are explored, and a full analysis will be carried out on each vehicle type regarding sustainability, cost, operations and staff well-being.

1.1. Vision and Objectives

Effective management of fleet related assets is critical to the delivery and performance of council services. This Fleet Strategy sets out and controls the management of council fleet related assets.

The objectives of the Fleet Strategy are:

- Ensure assets fit for purpose - All vehicles/plant and equipment will be 'fit for purpose' in terms of condition and suitability for the intended use.
- Ensure assets are used effectively – Assets will be treated as a corporate resource, and the need to own/maintain the vehicles/equipment will be regularly challenged and the performance of assets will be monitored and reported with the aim of eliminating unnecessary expenditure.
- Support sustainability - Assets, which run efficiently, maximise value for money, are environmentally and energy efficient contributing directly to delivering reductions in carbon emissions inclusive of the environmental life cycle of the vehicle and component parts (including fuel).
- Safety - The vehicle/plant or equipment must secure the minimum health and safety risk to our staff and members of the public.

Note: This strategy is not intended to cover the council's grey fleet (vehicles that are owned and driven by an employee for business purposes)

This strategy is well aligned with elements of the Strategic Plan in that it supports the council's response to the climate emergency, delivers modern services to the city and supports the improvement of health and wellbeing of staff and residents.

2. Fleet Profile

The total number of vehicles as of July 2023 is 124. However, the fleet profile will fluctuate due to housing growth, changes in legislation or the result of other county wide projects including the Colchester and Essex Waste Strategy.

The fleet portfolio is made up of a diverse range of vehicles from small cars, vans, light goods caged and tipper vans, tail-lift box vehicles, sweepers, JCB's and a range of heavy goods vehicles.

A current breakdown of the fleet is provided below, and the lifespan and replacement programme are detailed in table 1.0.

Vehicle Type	No of vehicles	Service	Electric	Hybrid	Diesel
RCV	36	R&W	0	0	36
Resilience RCV	5	R&W	0	0	5
Road Sweepers	6	SC&S	0	0	6
JCB	2	Depot	0	0	2
Cage Tippers	21	SC&S	0	0	21
Car/Van/4x4	54	SC&S, NEPP, Helpline, Greening	19	4	31

- R&W – Recycling & Waste
- SC&S – Street Care & Safety
- NEPP – North Essex Parking Partnership

Table 1.0 – Lifespan and replacement programme for the fleet.

Vehicle Type	Vehicle Count	Purchase year - CCC owned	End of lease agreement	Estimated life span from new	Replacement due
Refuse Collection Vehicles	28	2018(14) 2019(12) 2020(1) 2021 (1)		7 Years	2025(14) 2026(12) 2027(1) 2028 (1)
Refuse Collection Vehicles (Contract spare/spot hire)*	5		2025 (3) Spot hire (2)		

Food Waste Vehicles	7	2020		7 Years	2027
Food Waste vehicle resilience	1	2021			2023
Sweepers	6	2019		7 Years at time of purchase. 3/5 years now modelled depending on specification.	2026
JCB	2		2026	3-year contract hire	2026
Cage Tippers	19 +2 hired	2022(19)	Spot Hire (2)	7 Years	2028
Large size vans	3 (2 + Luton)	2018 2021	Spot Hire (1)	7/10 years should electric be an option	ASAP
Medium size vans	4 (2 GREEN, 1 BD, 1 PEST)		Spot Hire (4)	7/10 years should electric be an option	ASAP
Small size vans	12 (6 EV, 1 BD, 1 GREEN, 4 SC&S)	6 EV 2022	Spot Hire (6)	7/10 years should electric be an option	6 owned - 2030 7/10-year estimated life. 6 hire - ASAP
NEPP vans	4		2023	7/10 years should electric be an option	2024
NEPP cars	25	2021 (5) Used vehicle (12)	2023 (8)	7/10 years should electric be an option	2029 7/10-year estimated life.
Cars - Hybrid	4 (Helpline)	2021		7/10 years should electric be an option	2028
4x4	2	2022		7 Years	2029

Total 124

*Contract spare/hired vehicles that are not CCC owned therefore not part of the councils Fleet Strategy.

2.1. Corporate Fleet Assets Roles and Responsibilities Leadership and Cabinet

Under the Scheme of Delegation by the Leader of the Council to Cabinet Members, the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Waste has delegated executive powers of implementation within the confines of the Council's budget and policy framework.

Head of Neighbourhood Services and Fleet & Depot Manager

Under the Scheme of Delegation by the Leader of the Council to Officers, the Head of Neighbourhood Services has delegated powers to act within the approved budget and policy objectives of the Council in relation to fleet.

Overarching responsibility for the compliance of all requirements associated with the council's Vehicle Operators Licence and for the delivery of strategic fleet procurement, maintenance, and management rests with the Head of Neighbourhood Services and the Fleet & Depot Manager.

The Fleet & Depot Manager will provide advice and guidance for all departments within the council on all aspects related to vehicle, plant, and equipment assets operation related matters, including provision of driver training if required.

Directorates/Service Departments

Timely identification and clear communication of requirements to deliver services including the pursuit of alternative environmentally suitable modes of travel. Production of evidence-based business cases including financial commitment to seek amendments to fleet portfolio. Managing staff to ensure they comply with CCC policies and procedures, Transport and road traffic laws. Suitably manage drivers to ensure adherence to regulations and that there is no damage to the assets in their control and that the safety of themselves and others is not compromised in any way.

Drivers/Operators

Compliance with all elements of CCC driver policies, transport, and road traffic laws. Use the assets in accordance with operating instructions and return them in good condition. Provide feedback via their service department on the suitability of vehicles currently in service and any demonstration vehicles they are asked to trial.

Strategic Procurement

Provide specialist advice and support to Fleet & Depot Manager and lead the procurement process to ensure compliance with CCC and public procurement regulations.

Financial Services

Work with the Head of Neighbourhood Services, the Fleet & Depot Manager and service departments to produce, maintain and monitor a sustainable financial plan to support the strategy to ensure approved budgets are not exceeded. Provide

appropriate financial analysis on business cases, work with the Head of Neighbourhood Services, the Fleet & Depot Manager and service departments to identify appropriate funding for additional assets outside of the approved plan and challenge to ensure maximum efficiency and sustainability.

2.2. Storage and supply of fuel

Fuel is supplied from the Shrub End depot. The procurement and distribution of this fuel is managed by the Head of Neighbourhood Services and the Fleet & Depot Manager.

Fuel use for the current CCC vehicle fleet excluding vehicles/plant that fuel away from Shrub End is estimated at 514,124 litres (financial year 22/23 figures from TimePlan Fuel Management system).

The council's Greenhouse Gas Report identifies that the councils fleet emits an estimated 1,354.9tCO₂e *per annum*.

2.3. Fleet Asset Replacement and Management Process

The current core fleet assets have been identified via the formation of a live register. Service departments have and will continue to be required to confirm a continuing need for the assets. The council must invest in such assets to enable the delivery of core functions and responsibilities. For additional new vehicles or vehicle modifications/enhancements services must provide an approved business case clearly demonstrating the necessary ongoing funding is in place or which other parts of their fleet profile is to be reduced to accommodate any increased funding costs.

The financial investment required to support such a large and diverse asset replacement programme must not be underestimated and poses a very real challenge. With only minimal capital allocations secured significant additional funding is necessary to keep services operational. With demands exceeding available financial resources the need for a robust replacement plan is essential to prioritise replacements based on necessity.

The asset register will identify assets coming to end of operating life and/or when an asset is coming to the end of its funding arrangement or when cost of replacement has risen. The Fleet & Depot Manager will engage with service departments to determine if there is an ongoing future need and if so, explore marketplace advances to inform replacement options including Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV).

Replacement factor considerations:

- condition of vehicle
- mileage of vehicle
- age of vehicle
- service unit's requirement needs.

- whole life costs incurred to date.
- projected future maintenance costs if retention is considered.
- existing fuel type and carbon impact
- alternative marketplace fuelling options available and viable.

2.4. Decarbonising Our Vehicle Fleet

Since declaring a climate emergency on 17 July 2019, the council has taken action to calculate the emissions from its activities and operations and set an emissions baseline from which to measure progress against towards the carbon neutral emissions target by 2030.

The way in which council vehicles are operated and renewed is seen as a vital part of the response to the climate emergency and the expectation that the council become a leader in the fight to reduce the conurbations carbon emissions.

The Government's Road to Zero Strategy [The Road to Zero \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/791212/road-to-zero-strategy.pdf) presents a challenge to drastically reduce carbon emissions by 2030. For the council's fleet management, that means taking a 4-step approach to sustainability:

1. collecting accurate data around vehicle use
2. managing and reducing demand
3. switching to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) a paraffinic, premium quality second-generation renewable fuel that provides a cleaner-burning alternative for use in diesel engines. Whilst not the full solution it offers a significant important interim intervention in reducing greenhouse gas emissions by up to 90%. while other technologies are developed, (Section 5 of this paper provides further information on HVO).
4. investing in ultra-low-emission vehicles (ULEVs) and infrastructure where accessible and proven in the marketplace

Green vehicle technology is developing rapidly all the time, and the purpose of this strategy is not to second guess what future technology will emerge within the marketplace or predict our corporate transformation programme outcomes including understanding how and where services will be delivered across the city. At the heart of this strategy is a bold aim to significantly reduce the current carbon emissions and transition as many of the vehicles to be a ULEV fleet over the forthcoming years where these are marketplace available and proven effective, as well as promoting healthier forms of travel such as walking and cycling.

2.5. Marketplace overview

Industry acknowledges that the ULEV marketplace is yet to mature particularly in terms of the large goods vehicle fleet with some types of vehicles not widely available. Whilst over the past year development of the larger type of vehicle has expanded onto the market, these new market entrants' longevity and fitness for purpose remains in part unproven, however rapid progress is now being made.

As part of the Government's Green Industrial Revolution, and following extensive consultation with car manufacturers and sellers, the government has confirmed that the UK will end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, this date was put back to 2035 in a recent government announcement. The government also announced plans to phase out new diesel heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) by 2040 as part of a move to decarbonise all forms of transport.

2.6. Pathway to Achieve a Zero Tail Pipe Emissions Fleet

Our pathway details a series of steps to be fully considered before procurement is pursued.

- Where possible, in the first instance the fleet will continue to be rationalised as the transformation programmes develop, ensuring that vehicle utilisation is maximised whilst balancing a growing city and the operational needs of service departments.
- To compliment the fleet profile and encourage alternatives to services the introduction of a pool of electric bikes will be evaluated to encourage active travel where it is safe and appropriate to service delivery to do so.
- When a vehicle is due to be replaced, it will be replaced with an ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) as the vehicle of preference e.g., small van fleet. Essentially, and with consideration to existing council infrastructure and current availability, these are likely to be full electric vehicles or a petrol hybrid configuration at the present time.
- When a ULEV is not available, economically viable or cannot secure the necessary supporting infrastructure needs, the replacement vehicle will as a minimum be Clean Air Zone compliant and options of using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel which provides a straightforward alternative to diesel to significantly lower carbon emissions by as much as 90% may be considered. There exists some controversy regarding the use of HVO, with the Environment Agency stopping its use by contractors in 2022. However, a recent study carried out by Balfour Beatty Vinci and Imperial College has determined that the emissions factors are credible if the provenance of the ingredients is assured (i.e., made from waste material sources in the UK), and compliant with the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO).

Whilst ambitious, this strategy takes a measured approach in investing our limited funds in the rapidly evolving area of electric or other ultra-low emissions vehicle (ULEV) technology and recognises that the council is not best placed to stay on the cutting edge of technology development.

Electric vehicle infrastructure requirements are scalable, and Colchester's relatively small geography mitigates some of the concerns about electric vehicle range for being a suitable ULEV technology pathway for the council to pursue currently.

The council, like any organisation looking to invest in a large number of electric vehicles faces a challenge: charging infrastructure and capacity. Surveys of our sites suggest the capacity is limited to only charge a small number of vehicles.

To realise this strategy and achieve 94 new ULEV replacements including Large Goods Vehicles (LGV's) significantly bolstering the 23 vehicles already forming part of our ULEV fleet, investment in enabling infrastructure is key and will necessitate funding to upgrade the substation at an existing depot to address the current incoming main capacity limitations of 100kw to achieve 500kw, a large capacity network, a standard EV charger is rated at 7.2 kw and a larger chargers at 40kw / 50kw.

Investigation have shown that axillary sites can generally accommodate between 2 – 3 chargers without the need for infrastructure upgrades although each proposed location will need to be surveyed for confirmation.

2.7. How Electric Vehicles Stack Up

Electric vehicles are only one of several ULEV technologies within the transport marketplace but are one of the most advanced and readily available. Replacing existing petrol or diesel vehicles with electric vehicles (EVs) brings the environmental benefits of lowering carbon emissions and reducing local air pollution.

Development continues throughout the motor industry with new market entrants emerging in increasing numbers now including the Large Goods Vehicle market.

2.8. Renewal Cycles for EV

Currently ICE vehicles have a life cycle between 5 and 7 years. However, with less wear that EV's have the life of the vehicles can be extended. There may be some instances where battery degradation happens sooner depending on usage. Individual cells may be replaced which can be costly, however not as costly as replacing complete battery packs. Renewal schedules may differ with types and makes of vehicles depending on battery warranty terms and possible hydrogen fuel cell warranties.

Fleet transition timeline

Year	RCV	F.W.	Sweepers	JCB	Tippers	Large van	Medium van	Small van	Cars/4x4	Totals
23/24		1				1	4	10		16
24/25									12	12
25/26	14									14
26/27	12		6	2		2				22
27/28	1	7							8	16
28/29	1				19				4	24
29/30									2	2
30/31								6	5	11

*The above does not include contract spares or spot hired fleet.

Table indicates what can be transitioned and in which year it is scheduled to happen should budget allow and the relevant charging infrastructure be available.

Green vehicles are readily available.

Amber only certain types of vehicles available.

Red vehicles not readily available or in very early stages of development.

Should Hydrogen be a source of fuel all vehicle types would be within the red category as these fuel alternatives are in very early stages of production.

2.9. Potential Costings

RCV

Fuel type	Cost new	Additions	Fuel running costs
Electric - Purchase	£425,000	Off board charger £20,000	£0.32 Per kWh (day)* £0.23 per kWh (night)*
Electric - Hire & Maintenance	£693,000 over a seven-year term		£0.32 Per kWh (day)* £0.23 per kWh (night)*
Diesel	£210,000	£0	*£1.25 per litre (*11.10.23)
Hydrogen	£750,000	Hydrogen fuel tank required to store hydrogen at a depot £250,000	£6.50 per kg
*Running cost shown at current market price October 2023			

Van

Fuel type	Size	Cost new	Fuel running costs
Electric	medium	£28,000	£0.32 Per kWh (day)* £0.23 per kWh (night)*
Diesel	medium	£19,000	£1.25 per litre
Electric	Large	£54,000	£0.32 Per kWh (day)* £0.23 per kWh (night)*
Diesel	Large	£27,000	£1.25 per litre

*kWh per hour is our current tariff, in addition to these costs are the following, standing charge £11.19 per day, Site Fee £0.07 per day, Agreed availability charge £1.04 per kVa and a settlement charge of £0.02 per day.

3. Considerations

The Council has an ambition to transition all its current fleet to EV by no later than 2030.

To achieve this aim, this strategy sets the following objectives:

- Make effective and robust informed decisions.
- Ensure efficient and effective fleet management.
- Improve and future proof service delivery.
- Enhance fleet performance.

It is proposed that as the Council formulates its transition from diesel to greener fleet options, the following principles are agreed and considered at each stage and during the procurement process:

- Review the data systems in place to track, monitor and evaluate the fleet.
- Undertake robust evaluation of operational need and financial viability.
- Challenge the number and size of vehicles.
- Explore both lease hire and purchasing options, considering existing budgets.
- Base decisions on expert recommendations and guidance

3.1 Establish a transition team.

The successful transition of the CCC road transport fleet to a zero-emission fleet will require CCC to establish a small team encompassing fleet management and the main vehicle operating departments, estates, energy management, human resources (for grey fleet), procurement and finance. The robust appraisal of need and utilisation, changing vehicle procurement to a model based on WLC, funding the new fleet, putting in place the charging infrastructure to support new BEVs and addressing issues like home-based charging, will require input and resources from all the groups identified above, as well as a governance and reporting structure with full senior management team engagement.

The move to zero tailpipe emissions is a once in a generation transformation and is not just a project for the Fleet & Depot Manager.

4. Infrastructure

Current

In 2022 the council invested in ten wall mounted EV chargers at its St. Johns car park. These chargers have been utilised to charge EV's from SC&S, Environmental and NEPP services. In addition, two EV chargers were added to the Priory Streetcar Park, one has a double socket that are publicly accessible and an additional single unit for the use of CCC's car club.

In the summer of 2023 six double EV charging points were erected at the council's head office Rowan House. Of these six double units five of these are a single-phase unit, while the sixth is a three-phase charging unit. These are now currently being utilised.

Additional Requirement

To implement infrastructure to transition the entire RCV fleet (currently thirty-six CCC owned vehicles) would require an electrical substation.

In 2020 the Energy Savings Trust (EST) compiled a report on how CCC could decarbonise it's RCV's by transitioning them to fully electric vehicles. Section eight of that report looked at Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI). What follows is an extract from the report.

“Ideally vehicles should be charged overnight from 20:00 to 08:00 hrs, to avoid a negative impact on the local and national grid by charging during periods of peak use. It is therefore important that CCC negotiates low overnight and weekend off-peak tariffs for electricity at all sites, where electric vehicles may be based. It is also important to avoid charging weekdays during the 16:00 to 19:00 hrs peak period, when grid demand is at its maximum, grid GHG emission intensity is high, due to the use of gas generation, and the unit cost per kWh is also at its peak. However, if there is on-site generation for photovoltaic (solar), that should be used if available.

With several battery electric vehicles on the fleet, the infrastructure cost can be spread, and it is very likely that large parts of the charging infrastructure will outlive the vehicles, especially the expensive cabling and groundworks.

Cars and vans up to 60 kWh battery size can be charged overnight in less than 12 hours with 7.4 kW AC chargers but eRCVs will require more expensive 40 kW DC chargers, or 3-Phase AC supplies for on-board AC chargers.

Meeting the demand for EV charging – tracking data

Using the tracking data from the CCC fleet, the EST were able to estimate the charging capacity needed to meet peak demand. That peak occurs when several vehicles return with a low State of Charge (SoC) which will happen on the longer trips, or trips with high energy use due to a large load (tonnes collected) or many hydraulic movements (bin lifts and compactors).

There are several options for charging EVs. The simplest is to build sufficient site capacity (kW or kVA) to meet the simultaneous maximum demand for charging all the EVs from the grid connection at the full rate, supported by the charger regardless of the local “domestic” site load. This can be expensive, especially if it requires significant upgrades to the local grid infrastructure.

The alternative is to use some method of moderating the supply available to the chargers. This could be achieved by simply restricting the time when banks of chargers are operational or, with more sophisticated controls, limiting the power available to each charger and reallocating that capacity as vehicles are fully charged.

The issue with timed charging, which must be based on predicted need, is that there is a higher risk of some vehicles not having an adequate charge to complete the following day’s workload if they return with a much lower than anticipated SoC.

It is also possible to link the management of the energy available for charging EVs to the site’s “domestic” load so that the charging control system can maximise the current it draws as the load from the rest of the site falls. Each step-up in charger management requires more investment in the charging system but should avoid even more expensive capacity upgrades in the local grid and gives the fleet team greater visibility around demand and driver behaviour.

The EST determined the capacity required from four possible charging strategies.

- *The first is the capacity required for all the chargers to operate simultaneously at full power – this is the simplest option, and many vehicles will be fully charged in less than eight hours leaving unused capacity throughout the rest of evening.*
- *The second strategy considered assumes that all the vehicles return with 10% battery capacity and there is a charge management system in place to spread charging over the whole overnight period by restricting the capacity available to the chargers.*
- *The third strategy uses the tracking data, considers the mileage driven by the vehicles during the day and determines the electricity (kWh) required to return the vehicles to a fully charged state.*
- *The fourth and final strategy is much riskier. It allows the vehicle to run down throughout the week by ensuring that each vehicle has enough power to complete the next day’s workload and is only fully recharged over the weekend. This final strategy only works with a very predictable daily workload and does not accommodate changes made at short notice. It is a high-risk strategy and should only be considered if the site capacity is severely constrained, upgrade is very expensive, and the vehicles have a very predictable work pattern.*

Table below: Site capacity required by different charging strategies.

Strategy	Description	kW	Notes
1	Simple maximum capacity – all 100% charged	1,040	Very Expensive

2	<i>Smart - worst case – all 100% charged</i>	533	<i>Expensive as over 400kVA</i>
3	<i>All departures 100% charged</i>	498	<i>Optimal</i>
4	<i>No unnecessary off-site charging, not all 100%.</i>	351	<i>High risk</i>

It may be difficult to create the 500 kW of headroom predicted to be needed to fully charge the eRCVs overnight. The EST believe this may be a worse case estimate but only a long-term detailed on-site evaluation of an eRCV across all the CCC routes will determine that. Dennis Eagle has a policy of limiting the initial number of eRCV to two and these will provide all the data needed to confirm the impact of an eRCV fleet.

EVCI Recommendation

CCC will need at least 526 kVA capacity to charge a large fleet of electric RCVs (assuming a power factor of 0.95).

If the entire fleet (including the smaller vehicles) is moved to electric power, then even that capacity may not be sufficient and consideration should be given to other options like installing onsite battery storage or charging some of the fleet at other council sites, or, (for the smaller vehicles at least,) whether charging at employee homes is practicable and finally - probably as an option of last resort - a further upgrade of the site capacity which will be expensive.

Careful monitoring of new electric vehicles as they join the fleet will allow the estimate of future demand to be refined and a strategy developed long before the whole fleet has switched to electric power. All CCC EVs should all be equipped with on-board telemetry that is “EV-aware” and can report battery state of charge as well as total kWh received from charge points and distance travelled. This data needs to be linked to good fleet data management system.”

5. Alternative Fuels

An alternative replacement fuel is currently available called Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), which is a paraffinic diesel fuel that can be used as a direct replacement for diesel. It offers superior operational and environmental performance over fossil diesel with significant environmental benefits in terms of tailpipe emissions, while supporting existing logistical infrastructure. The claimed advantages of using HVO include:

- HVO is a renewable diesel alternative NOT a biodiesel.
- It is manufactured from 100% renewable and sustainable raw materials, certified by the ISCC (ISCC is the gold standard for environmental, economic, and social sustainability, globally)
- Net greenhouse gas CO₂e reduction of up to 90% versus fossil diesel fuel
- It claims significant reductions in Noxious tail pipe emissions.
- It also claims a significant reduction in NO_x (nitrogen oxide) and PM (particulate matter)

- It has approval from many manufacturers including Volvo who provide engines for Dennis Elite vehicles.
- No engine modifications or new infrastructure required to change over.

CCC’s Climate Emergency Officer commented on the use of HVO which is shown below,

“This fuel is better than the current diesel option that is used in our vehicles (if this is just standard diesel), especially as ‘steppingstone’ fuel to the fleet becoming greener. This is just as important as skipping straight to EV (Electric Vehicle), making emissions reductions now is better than waiting four years for EV/Hydrogen fuel options to arise. You always want to reduce emissions as quickly as possible, if you do not lock yourself out of better alternatives (i.e., in this case use of EVs/Hydrogen Fuel where it is viable).”

All the figures shown below are based on these vehicles using regular road diesel. At this time, attention is drawn to the CO2 tonnes emitted.

Taking the three vehicles highlighted below running on road diesel they would have emitted 7.283t of CO2. On HVO it is claimed they will have produced 90% less CO2 equalling to 0.7283t of CO2 making a CO2 reduction of 6.5447 tonnes of CO2 emitted over a one-month period for three RCV’s.

Vehicle	Drivers	EEDI	Target MPG	Actual MPG	Diff %	Analysis	Distance (Miles)	Fuel (litres)	CO2 Tonnes Emitted
VE68YNZ - Dennis Elite 6	0	58	4.00	5.12	27.92%		1373.96	1,220.70	3.077
VN68RYM - Dennis Elite 6	0	57	4.00	5.35	33.84%		977.62	830.18	2.093
VN68RYO - Dennis Elite 6	0	63	4.00	5.10	27.49%		1379.13	1,229.41	3.099
VN68RYP - Dennis Elite 6	0	66	4.00	5.20	30.02%		1123.05	981.70	2.474
VN68RYR - Dennis Elite 6	0	88	4.00	4.49	12.16%		1053.38	1,067.38	2.690
VN68RYT - Dennis Elite 6	0	61	4.00	4.73	18.30%		1032.25	991.69	2.500
VN68RYU - Dennis Elite 6	0	67	4.00	5.28	31.92%		1310.47	1,128.97	2.846
VN68RYV - Dennis Elite 6	0	68	4.00	4.78	19.44%		871.15	828.96	2.089

5.1 HVO and other drop-in fuels

In September 2023 the Energy Savings Trust provided some information on HVO and other ‘drop-in’ fuels. They said *“There has been growing interest in use of this*

'drop-in' diesel replacement fuel. Much of the demand is based around its very low BEIS TTW CO₂e conversion factor, 0.0356 kgCO₂e/litre¹, versus 2.478 kgCO₂e/litre for (average biofuel blend) diesel. While we recognise the theoretical benefits of HVO, there are remaining concerns about the source of its principal feedstock, Used Cooking Oil (UCO) and the use of this fuel under the current sustainability assurance regime. We expect and hope that one significant positive outcome of the DfT's low carbon fuels strategy consultation is to improve the robustness of the assurance process for this fuel and its feedstock.

In the UK and Europe, where UCO is classified as a waste product and has few approved secondary uses, it is much easier to trace its origin back to its producer than non-European UCO. Fundamentally, we must be certain that the UCO, used as a feedstock for HVO is in fact a waste product. In south-east Asia and the Americas, where almost all of the UCO imported into Europe originate, UCO has sometimes been used as animal feed (mixed with grain) and so in some cases it is not a true waste product, as it has a permitted use.

The high price that UCO suppliers are achieving because of its 'waste' classification in Europe, is resulting in a distortion of the world market: UCO is diverted from the less financially rewarding markets and is replaced with other farmed crops which may include palm oil. In instances where palm oil cannot be harvested, soy is grown instead but this crop has a lower energy yield than palm oil and so even more land must be used for crop planting. The greater demand for palm oil and other types of crop-derived oil contributes to further global deforestation, and other indirect land use change (ILUC) leading to reduction in biodiversity, a loss of ecosystem services and further increases in GHG emissions.

According to the DfT's (2020) complete RTFO data², 100% of UCO feedstock for UK HVO came from outside Europe and none of the HVO sold in the UK was produced using UK UCO. 104 million litres of UCO were produced in the UK in 2020 but none of this was used to make HVO for domestic use. In 2021, the provisional figures show only 9% of UCO was European in origin (Spain, Italy, and Czech Republic). This contrasts with 100% of biomethane feedstock coming from Europe in both years.

As quoted on the BEIS conversion factors, "All fuels with biogenic content, such as (average biofuel blend) diesel and petrol and all electricity consumption should have the biogenic CO₂ emissions reported, to ensure a complete picture of an organisation's emissions is created". Instead of the 80-95% carbon reduction sometimes quoted from adopting HVO, the combined TTW, WTT and out-of-scope emissions figure, shows a much more modest reduction in carbon intensity (around 18%)".

5.2 Hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles (H₂FCEVs)

The Energy Savings Trust also spoke about Hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles writing the following "A common question is around whether H₂FCEVs will be

suitable for future vehicle replacements on fleets like those operated by a refuse and recycling local authority. H2FCEVs offer potentially convenient rapid refuelling, and zero harmful air quality emissions where vehicles are operating.

Whilst there is a potential role for 'green' hydrogen in decarbonising heavy transport (distinct from the carbon intensive 'grey' hydrogen and methane-derived 'blue' hydrogen), it is not yet clear whether this will be the best pathway for refuse and recycling local authority vehicles for the following reasons:

- A hydrogen fuel cell uses more than three times the electrical energy of charging a battery for the same amount of energy to arrive at the wheels of as a BEV. This means more than three times the energy needs to be generated and this comes at both a financial and environmental cost.*
- When well to wheel factors such as distribution and transport of the hydrogen are taken into account, the energy use of the fuel cell is likely to be between four to six times that of a battery electric equivalent (Zemo Partnership, 2021).*
- The lower efficiency of producing hydrogen for fuel cells not only means extra cost but is likely to divert renewable power away from the grid (as growing off peak demands of a national battery electric fleet are emerging), thus slowing broader decarbonisation.*
- Using H2FCEVs simply adds inefficient processes to energy generation and costly additional components and maintenance requirements compared to a BEV. It is highly likely that there will viable high-capacity battery / rapid charging alternative emerging within this decade that will cover all refuse and recycling local authority operations.*
- H2FCEVs cost significantly more to purchase than BEVs and unlike them, do not offer any savings from reduced energy consumption to offset the higher costs when compared to diesel vehicles.*
- Fuel cell vehicles are more technically complex than BEVs and thus will require more maintenance expenditure.*
- Refuse and recycling local authority would ideally need reliable local third-party hydrogen refuelling infrastructure if investing in a fleet of that nature, along with a back-up plan if the refuelling supply becomes unavailable.*

For some hard to electrify vehicles, hybrid solutions that work primarily using a battery and use fuel cells as a range extender may well be helpful options that emerge later in the decade, but these are not yet commercially available from any OEMs, and local refuelling infrastructure remains critical”.

The below link was shared with CCC by Nottingham City Council who are one of the UK's local authority leaders in transitioning their fleet services to fully electric vehicles. It is an article for Einride who carried out extensive research to compare alternative ways to fuel a heavy good vehicle.

<https://www.einride.tech/insights/battery-electric-vs-hvo-vs-hydrogen-fuel-cell>

6. Wellbeing Staff & Residents

The wellbeing of staff and residents is a key factor when transitioning the fleet portfolio. The introduction of electric, hydrogen or other low carbon alternative fuelled vehicles will lead to better air quality, which in turn leads to better health outcomes for people working and living where these vehicles will operate due to their zero or

low tailpipe emissions. Electric / hydrogen vehicles will help to further drive down air pollution in the city and improve the environment.

For local authorities, switching to zero emissions vehicles can generate substantial emission savings, as well as help to deliver carbon neutral targets. For CCC staff they provide a smooth and quiet driving experience while an increase in vehicle torque is a welcomed addition to the drivers carrying heavy loads. The introduction of further zero emission tailpipe vehicles will continue to demonstrate the council's leadership on the path to net zero and cleaner air.

7. Options

There are many options that the council can consider when transitioning the current fleet in the future. The three main options are shown below and will be considered at the point of replacement or when making new purchases.

1. The council could commit to transitioning all its current fleet when due for renewal over to fully electric powered vehicles, this option is in line with the councils current CEAP. To implement this, significant capital investment would be required to build a suitable charging infrastructure within a suitable location to have the ability to fully charge the councils vehicles. To procure the highly expensive electric vehicles an analysis of costings would be required to determine if the vehicles are to be purchased or contract hired.
2. The council has the option to use Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) as a drop in fuel. This could be used as a stop gap until a fully zero tail pipe emission fleet is procured. This could be implemented immediately into much of the council's fleet including the RCV's to reduce the tail pipe emissions that the vehicle emits. More and more local authorities are taking this option as they wait for the electric and hydrogen fleet market to develop further.
3. Business as usual, the council continues to run with its current fleet and when the current vehicles are due to be renewed, they are replaced with the latest Euro engine diesel version. In the short term this is the most cost-effective way however this option does not meet with the councils current Climate Emergency action plan. The electric and hydrogen fleet market continues to develop and with future localised waste strategies and legislation changes local authorities need to ensure the way in which services are to be delivered before making the switch to more sustainable vehicles as vehicle range may factor into procurement decisions.

Extract from the draft minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Panel meeting of 21 March 2024

122. Colchester City Council Fleet Transition Strategy

The Panel heard that the Chair had decided to deal with this item at this point in the meeting, instead of in the sequence published in the agenda document.

Robert Doran, Fleet and Depot Contract Manager, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Panel with its enquiries. The report was presented in response to the suggestions and questions posed by the Panel at its last meeting in February 2024, and addressed the recycling and reuse of batteries, emissions associated with manufacturing, the need for investment in infrastructure and the comparative costs of fuel types.

A Panel member considered the point of origin of modern vehicles, noting that the manufacturer of a vehicle no longer indicated where it was physically made. It was suggested that an addition was made to the proposed recommendation to Cabinet which stated “When selecting suppliers of vehicles, due regard is given to the environmental, employment and human rights standards in place at the point of manufacture of substantial components, including battery technology, of the vehicle which is being procured.” In terms of the phrase ‘significant components’, it was suggested that this would relate to components which represented over 25% of value of the vehicle in question.

In discussion, the Panel wondered whether using the value of the vehicle as a guide was the right approach to take, given that the vast majority of a vehicle could be composed of material which was not of high value, but which could have originated from a country without high standards of care for workers. It was suggested by a Panel member that in the past when buying a vehicle which was of a European or American brand, it was possible to be reasonably assured that the parts for the vehicle originated in Europe or America, but this was no longer the case.

In discussion, the Panel considered the suggested amendment to the recommendation, and believed that the wording was broad enough to provide a useful guide to Officers, and was not restricted solely to batteries in vehicles. The Officer’s report demonstrated that the Council was already taking into account issues which had been raised earlier in the meeting.

The Fleet and Depot Contract Manager assured the Panel that when making decisions on vehicle procurement, the proposed Strategy had been written to give Officers different options, and at no point did it stress that electric vehicles were necessarily the default option. When procuring vehicles, Officers would speak with other local authorities and partners to ensure that the right vehicle was purchased, irrespective of its fuel source.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

- The proposed Colchester City Council Fleet Transition Strategy be implemented;
- When selecting suppliers of vehicles, due regard is given to the environmental, employment and human rights standards in place at the point of manufacture of substantial components (those components representing greater than 25% of the market cost of the vehicle), including battery technology, of the vehicle which is being procured.

Extract from the minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Panel meeting of 21 March 2024

123. Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve Improvements

Glyn Evans attended the meeting and addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rules 5 (1). He was a local Councillor and professional naturalist and wished to address the Panel about Ferry Marsh. He considered that there was no longer a dispute that there was a climate and biodiversity crisis, and this was at odds with the current housing crisis which often required housing to be built on green spaces, which lead to contracting space for local wildlife. Some years ago, Ferry Marsh had become an area of wetland due to blocked drainage, and this had led to a huge increase in biodiversity as well as other benefits that were associated with this type of terrain such as carbon sequestration. Mr Evans considered that a new management regime was required for the area which optimised it as a local nature reserve for the benefit of biodiversity. Although in the past there had been a path through the middle of the area, the marsh had become an area of reed wetland which attracted very shy species, and it was important that these species were not disturbed. There was the possibility of additional funding being obtained through the creation of biodiversity credits, and it was very important that modified access was provided to the wildlife which was reflected in the current proposals before the Panel.

The Panel wondered what effect the raised water level would have on the local area, would neighbouring roads and the railway be at increased danger of flooding? How would the potential loss of public open space in the area be accounted for? Fiona Shipp, Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager, attended the meeting and advised the Panel that the proposed management plan would not allow flooding of the Wivenhoe Trail, and the water level would additionally be managed to allow service access to the drain. The water levels on the marsh would be controlled in a manner which had not been possible in the past when levels had risen due to a blocked pipe. This blockage had now been cleared and it was possible to manually let water flow from the marsh into the river if necessary, providing a much more controlled environment from both a flooding and enhanced wildlife perspective. The Council's team of Countryside Rangers did already manage nature reserves as well as sites of special scientific interest, and had significant experience in this role.

Graham Sutton attended the meeting and addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rules 5 (1). He was a resident of Wivenhoe and wished to support the proposal for the management of Ferry Marsh which had been put forward. Although in general terms he would be concerned about any proposal which sought to limit access to public open space, in this instance he considered that public benefit could be served in many ways and the environmental improvement and access to enhanced nature which was being offered more than offset any reduced access to the site. He believed that the public interest was best served by enhancing the wildlife on Ferry Marsh which would be enjoyed not only by the residents of Wivenhoe, but also the wider population. He was aware

of a large number of bird watchers who were taking a keen interest in the site, and he believed that a very diverse group of people were now enjoying what the Marsh had to offer, and who were amazed and enthused by the site. He believed that there was no significant loss of utility associated with the closure of the path through the Marsh and that the benefit of the management scheme which was being proposed were disproportionately beneficial when compared to the amount of work which would be required.

The Panel noted that the path through the middle of the marsh had been closed for approximately 2 years since the marsh had flooded, and this closure had not generated a significant number of complaints. It was intended that the path remain closed under the proposed management scheme.

Professor Jane Black attended the meeting remotely and addressed the Panel pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rules 5 (1). She stated that her views were supported by the Wivenhoe Society Committee. She advised the Panel that Ferry Marsh had been gifted to the people of Colchester to provide public open space for the residents of new housing development, and in principle the whole of the area had been open to the public until it had flooded. The path across the marsh had been used by local people and had been closed since the flooding, and the proposed public access to the site was only for a very small area, which was inconsistent with the idea of a publicly accessible open space. It was suggested that the public consultation in respect of the proposed management scheme had been inadequate, and the public had not been directly asked whether or not the proposed access was supported. She stated that public access to Ferry Marsh could be modified by requiring people to keep to the main path and keeping dogs on short leads. Although the Officer's report asserted that biodiversity in the area had increased partly due to the exclusion of the public, there was no firm evidence to support this, and the data which had been provided concerning the number and species of birds was for a single year with no comparative data from previous years. It was suggested that the path across the Marsh should be reinstated at least temporarily with measures in place to control dogs, and the numbers of breeding birds should be recorded for a few years to gauge whether there was any significant decline. If it was evidenced that there had been a significant adverse effect on the bird population then the current proposal could be resubmitted. It was noted that the Officer's report suggested that Wivenhoe Town Council was supportive of the proposals, but it was her understanding that the Town Council had not, in fact, taken such a stance. If a Town Councillor had formed a part of the working group which had reviewed the consultation results, then they had not been acting as a designated representative of the Town Council as part of this group.

A Panel member was the ward member for Wivenhoe for the City Council, and although not a member of the Town Council had worked closely with this body when considering the future of Ferry Marsh. He confirmed that it was his belief that the Town Council had not taken an official resolution, either for or against, in relation to the proposals for the site.

In response to the points which had been made by Jane Black, the Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager confirmed that the suggestion that access to the central path be regulated was a reasonable one and that some nature

reserves did employ systems of seasonal access or zones where dogs were required to be on leads. In the case of Ferry Marsh, however, the intention was to take a stronger stance on access due to the special nature of the site and the high quality of wildlife which could be found there as a result of the flooding. It was not unusual for nature reserves to contain areas which were free of people and dogs, and it was the intention of the proposed management scheme for the area to find a balance which allowed wildlife to flourish while also allowing people to visit and enjoy the area. It was reiterated to the Panel that flooding in the area would be very carefully controlled and would not therefore represent an ongoing risk to the area.

Responding to the points which had been made, Jane Black commented that although it had been said that biodiversity had improved at Ferry Marsh, no evidence had been provided to support this statement, and nothing had been said about other animals there such as insects, butterflies and lizards, with the report focusing on bird life. The fact remained that the area had been given for the benefit of local housing and was the subject of a covenant, and the use of the land was effectively being denied to local residents.

In discussion, the Panel wondered how biodiversity credits could be used by the Council? The Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager confirmed that this was something that could be considered, and that Officers were starting to understand how biodiversity credits could benefit the Council. It was believed that Ferry Marsh could be a very suitable site for obtaining biodiversity credits as it should be possible to demonstrate a clear biodiversity net gain, although other grant funding may also be available on this site.

A Panel member had been closely involved with the Ferry Marsh project and gave an update to the Panel. There had been concerns from across the local community in respect of the extent of the flooding on the site, and in particular damage that may be caused to local paths and railway lines. When the sluice had been cleaned the water level had fallen significantly and concerns about flooding had been addressed. Water levels would be managed in the future to ensure that they remained at safe levels, and although there was a small risk that the levels may not be able to be managed successfully, a number of additional controls would be implemented to counter this risk. Groups such as the Essex Wildlife Trust and Natural England had been working together with Council Officers and the local community. There had been online consultations and 4 in-person events, where feedback about the proposed loop paths around the site had been received, and the Officer's report was an accurate representation of the wishes of residents which had been expressed via these consultations. The concerns which had been raised by some residents about the potential loss of public open space were understood, it had been ensured that public access remained through paths around the site, and it was considered that the area remained a lovely space which could be accessed well by residents. Given the current biodiversity crisis, it was necessary to find a balance in the management of the site which allowed some public access while also ensuring that in increased biodiversity of the area was protected.

A Panel member noted that a local housing estate produced water runoff into the marsh and that a covenant existed on the site which had been the subject of legal advice, however, the advice had not been included in the Officer's report. Although

he was very happy to support the proposals, he remained concerned about the loss of public open space, and how this was impacted from a legal perspective. He noted that mention had been made of acquiring the site from the Crown Estate, what did this mean in practical terms? He had been assured when hearing that residents were aware of what the proposals entailed.

In response to the questions which had been raised, the Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager acknowledged that water runoff from a local housing estate may contain chemicals, however, the reed beds present on the marsh were extremely effective at filtering water and cleaning the ecosystem naturally. The risks which had been detailed in the Officer's report had related primarily to the requirement to clear the sluice as opposed to the need to control flooding in the area which had been addressed in discussion at the meeting. With regard to the concerns about the loss of public open space which had been raised, the Panel heard that Ferry Marsh had not been lost, but rather a fantastic nature reserve had been gained. Legal advice had been taken from the Council's legal advisor, and the risks relating to the potential breach of the covenant on the land had been considered. The covenant was still capable of being enforced, and there was a need to maintain a path through the centre of the area for access use when managing the land. However, there was an important distinction to be drawn between the closure of the path altogether, and restricting access to it. A direct quote from the Council's legal advisor could be provided to the Panel if this was felt to be necessary.

A Panel Member addressed the question which had been raised about the possibility of acquiring the site from the Crown Estate, and confirmed that he had personally spoken to the Crown Estate about the site some years ago, when it had been made clear to him that the Crown Estate had no interest in managing the site at all, and would happily relinquish it to the control of the Council. There would, of course, be legal costs associated with such a transfer of responsibility and these could be explored separately.

In discussion, the Panel appreciated the detailed and enthusiastic input which it had received during the meeting from all parties and noted the desire to strike a balance between preserving the ecological diversity of the area, while still allowing reasonable public access. The increasing importance of marsh areas as areas of biodiversity was recognised, and it was accepted that the public would still have access to the site through the loop paths which were provided around the edge of the area. It was assured that local views appeared to have been taken on board, but did consider that Cabinet should be provided with the full legal advice, in part B of the published agenda, in respect of the covenant which was in place on the land when it was asked to make a decision.

RESOLVED that:

- A complete copy of the legal advice which had been received in respect of the covenant which existed on Ferry Marsh be provided to Cabinet as an exempt from publication document, when Cabinet was being asked to consider recommendations in respect of Ferry Marsh.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that:

- The changes to Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve as set out in the Officer's Report be approved.

Please note that the report considered by the Environment and Sustainability Panel at its meeting on 21 March 2024 is attached as background information. The Legal Advice referred to in the Panel's resolution is included in Part B of the Cabinet agenda.

05 March 2024

Report of	Head of Sustainability	Author	Fiona Shipp
Title	Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve improvements		☎ 01206 589250
Wards affected	Wivenhoe		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve in Wivenhoe is managed by the Council's Countryside Team and in recent years, there has been a change of habitat with a significant increase in biodiversity due to the site having wetter conditions and reduced human access. As responsible landowners of the site, in the context of the Climate Emergency, and following public consultation, agreement is sought to protect the increase in biodiversity as a result of these changes.
- 1.2 In partnership with Natural England, Essex Wildlife Trust and Wivenhoe Town Council, the Council would like to introduce a system to control the water levels to an acceptable level that encourages the new wildlife to flourish, whilst minimizing the disruption to existing wildlife and still enabling the Rangers and Volunteers to maintain the site as per the management plan. This will help protect the biodiversity to continue to flourish at this site.
- 1.3 This revised paper contains key changes under 6.6, 10.1, 13.3 and appendices B,C,and D.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To recommend to Cabinet that it approve of the changes to Ferry Marsh Nature Reserve as set out in the report.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To control the water levels to an acceptable level that encourages the new wildlife to flourish, whilst minimizing the disruption to existing wildlife and still enabling the Rangers and volunteers to maintain the site as per the management plan. This is aligned to feedback received from public consultation and supports objectives set out in the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and in its Strategic Plan.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 If no further work is carried out to manage water levels, then we will not be able to maintain optimal water level for biodiversity, and benefits gained during recent flooding may be permanently lost. It will not be possible to fully deliver the sites management plan which recommends wetness of the site maintained for marsh and ditch assemblages. It may also not be possible to improve the Site of Special Scientific Interest condition to 'favourable'. If access is reinstated to the closed path, then disturbance by people and

dogs will increase, which is likely to affect sensitive bird life. More dogs accessing the water is likely to affect water quality and invertebrate life because of the effects of flea medications on dogs.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 Ferry Marsh (part of Colne Local Nature Reserve) in Wivenhoe is managed by the Council's Countryside Team and in recent years, there has been a change of habitat with a significant increase in biodiversity due to the site having wetter conditions and reduced human access.
- 5.2 In light of the current climate and biodiversity emergency faced by Colchester, the Council have been encouraged by the increase in biodiversity at this site, and as responsible landowners would seek to protect this.
- 5.3 In 1999, Colchester Borough Council took over the management of Ferry Marsh which is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI) These designations both place priority on the wildlife of the site and although managed by the Countryside Team, the site has never been designated a 'Country Park' where human activities should have greater priority.
- 5.4 From 2002 – 2017, the site largely remained a dry marsh gradually improving in quality due to the management by CBC, especially after 2010 when a section was placed off limits to people and dogs by the creation of ditch habitats for Water Voles under the guidance of Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT).
- 5.5 During this drier period however there is evidence that the site was becoming wetter with the Environment Agency unblocking the sluice three times during flooding events. Evidence from notes in previous management plans indicates that there had at times been limited access to the site due to its wet nature. There were resulting changes in the wildlife: Water Voles increased; Sea Barley arrived bringing another 'yellow' Nationally Scarce plant into the site.
- 5.6 In 2018, the sluice onsite blocked, water levels started to rise and access across the marsh was restricted by flooding. The sluice was no longer the original Environment Agency (EA) installed sluice, but a replacement installed by a developer that had now liquidated. The EA no longer unblocked the sluice, which thus remained blocked.
- 5.7 In 2020, the higher levels of water had greatly enlarged the areas of reedbed and by 2022 this had started to be broken up by natural pools forming in the centre, ideal for wildlife especially birds. In the summer of 2020, 40 pairs of Reed Warblers were spotted, 2 pairs of Reed Buntings, new species including 5 singing Cetti's Warbler, 4 pairs of Little Grebes together with Cuckoos. (Dr. Chris Gibson 2020 - bird survey records)
- 5.8 In 2022, all the Nationally Scarce qualifying plants still remained, and further species have also been discovered such as Divided Sedge. The other components of the Site of Special Scientific Interest are changing too, with Barrier Marsh having a thriving population of National Scarce Mousetail. The Outfall was cleared resulting in a significant change to the biodiversity on site which had built up over the years. Breeding bird numbers dropped instantly as the habitat changed and disturbance and predation factors such as foxes, dogs and cats moved in.
- 5.9 Fortunately, Cetti's Warblers remained and as Schedule 1 breeding birds this necessitated the closure of the cross-marsh path by CBC.

- 5.10 In 2023, in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust, the ditch network was checked to monitor the water vole population. Although this was not a full survey due to not wishing to disturb nesting birds, it found water voles exploiting all the ditches, which was an expansion on their previous distribution, and reassurance that the population survived well through the flooded period. This shows there is scope for a controlled higher water level without adversely affecting the water vole population.
- 5.11 In partnership with Natural England, Essex Wildlife Trust and Wivenhoe Town Council, proposals were discussed to introduce a system to control the water levels to an acceptable level that encourages the new wildlife to flourish, whilst minimizing the disruption to existing wildlife and still enabling the Rangers and Volunteers access to maintain the site as per the management plan, to help protect the biodiversity to continue to flourish at this site.
- 5.12 A public consultation was designed to allow users and local residents to give feedback to our proposals which included:
- Adapt the external sluice to minimise future maintenance and remove the need to unblock to prevent flooding.
 - Introduce an internal system to control the water levels to an acceptable level that encourages the new wildlife to flourish, whilst minimizing the disruption to existing wildlife and still enabling the Rangers and Volunteers access to maintain the site as per the management plan.
 - An internal water level control system could be in the form of a sluice or system of sluices that would allow the Rangers to regulate the water levels on site.
 - Water level to be established which optimises the wetland habitat and not compromising the banks already engineered for Water Voles
 - Creation of a reliable system which avoids flooding beyond the set level and reduces the risk of flooding burrows significantly.
 - Modifying the access to the site by creating a short loop to enable users to walk through a small section of reedbed.
 - Improving the surface of the sea wall to provide easier access.
 - Installing a viewing platform / screen along Rowhedge Ferry Road
 - Expanding the Nature Reserve by acquiring and managing the Crown Estate owned land adjacent to Ferry Marsh
- 5.13 In December 2023, Colchester City Council carried out the consultation asking local residents their thoughts and opinions on the following options (Results in Section 6.3 - 6.5) and Visual Summary in Appendix A):
- How do you currently access and enjoy Ferry Marsh? *Options: A walkthrough route to Wivenhoe Trail, watching local wildlife, Dog Walking, exercise, peace and tranquillity, photography, cycle route, taking children/family, Other*
 - What improvements would you like to see made to Ferry Marsh? *Please rank the below in order of priority – Management of water Levels in order to prevent flooding, Management of water levels to increase wildlife and diversity and abundance,*

improve surfacing along the sea wall path, Installation of bird hide/screen, Seasonal access to marsh, management to decrease level of disturbance, more benches

- The marsh does not currently include land adjacent to Old Ferry Road, it is own by Crown Estate. Would you support Colchester City Council expanding the nature reserve to include the Crown Estate land? *Yes/No/No Preference*
- Would you support Colchester City Council in introducing further methods to manage the water levels on site? *Yes/No/No Preference*
- Would you support Colchester *City Council in protecting the biodiversity through modified access to the marsh? Yes/No/other*
- Any other comments

5.14 A working group which comprised of Council officers, local Councillors for Wivenhoe Town Council, Ward Councillors for Wivenhoe and representatives from Essex Wildlife Trust and Natural England met in March 2023 to review the results of the consultation. All parties were supportive to proceed with all options listed above including keeping the main path in the Marsh closed to the general public, introducing a short circular walk so that people can still enjoy 'entering' the Marsh but with minimal disturbance to the wildlife and progressing the site improvements such as a viewing screen.

5.15 Colleagues in Natural England and Essex Wildlife Trust are satisfied that the above actions do not put at risk the Site of Special Scientific Interest designation for the site and in introducing a water control system, the Site of Special Scientific Interest status will be in a better position to achieve a more favourable condition.

5.16 Should agreement be given to this proposal, then the next steps include the following:

- Understanding the water levels and what they should be within the Marsh and carrying out a formal level survey and installing datum points.
- Work with Essex Wildlife Trust as they have experience of installing a water control system on the River Stort.
- Work with Essex Wildlife Trust to undertake a Water Vole survey.
- Create the short loop at the northern part of the site – ensure that dogs can't breach the loop and jump into the Marsh.
- Create bird screens - one near the Old Rowhedge Ferry Road track and one off of the short loop walk.
- Seek formal Natural England Ascent for any works, allowing for 28 days' notice.
- Determine exactly what the land ownership boundaries are for the houses and the Crown Estate Land and start a dialogue around potentially managing the Crown Estate owned land and what liabilities would come with managing the land.

5.17 It might not be possible to achieve all the above simultaneously, however having a commitment to deliver them would mean including them into the Ranger's Site Action Plan for the coming year.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 In December 2023, Colchester City Council carried out a consultation asking local residents their thoughts and opinions around the options above. There were 4 drop-in sessions organised in Wivenhoe (Tuesday 13th December; Saturday 17th December; Tuesday 10th January; Saturday 14th January 2023). A total of 217 people attended the four in-person sessions whereby they were able to view information boards, engage with Council officers, ask questions to the Natural England representative, and generally find out more.
- 6.2 There was also an online consultation which ran for 6 weeks, and a total of 175 people responded to the online consultation.

See Appendix A for a visual summary of the results.

- 6.3 Over 70% of the respondents supported protecting the biodiversity of the site through modified access to the Marsh. This question is the main point of the consultation as in essence, either the Council re-allows access through the marsh which will have an adverse effect on the biodiversity of the site, or the Council continues to restrict access (modify in this case by providing an alternative) which some local residents were against.
- 6.4 There was over 65% support in introducing further measures to control the water levels on site and over 80% support for the Council to expand the land management of the marsh to include the Crown Estate section.
- 6.5 Interestingly, responses indicated that it was a greater priority to manage the water levels to increase wildlife and biodiversity closely followed by management of water levels to prevent flooding. Management to decrease / limit disturbance to wildlife in the marsh was the third highest priority.
- 6.6 There was some concern raised at the previous Environment & Sustainability Panel in September 2023 that the consultation wording was confusing causing people to potentially answer incorrectly, and that people weren't asked directly about the path removal. However, reassurance has been received from the team that ran and attended the sessions that they tried to speak to all people who attended to explain the questions and what was being asked and what the impact of this would be.

7. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 7.1 An [Equality Impact Assessment](#) (EIA) has been completed.
- 7.2 It is considered that the proposals do not breach human rights as a service will continue to be offered.

8. Strategic Plan References

- 8.1 The proposal directly links to the vision, themes and objectives of the Strategic Plan 2023-26, specifically 'Respond to the Climate Emergency', particularly 'Conserve and enhance our biodiversity'.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 The decision will be published in a press release and available on the Council's website. The working group referenced earlier in this report will also be advised of the decision.

10. Financial implications

10.1 Implementation of the above next steps will rely on budget being available part of which will be funded through the Countryside Team's site budget and installed by the Ranger Team and volunteers.

Creation of simple bird screen and fencing around short loop path.

- £2,000 Total for Chestnut paling fencing and field gate for short loop path
- £500/bird screen for timber.

The following will need to be funded separately and preferably from external grant funding.

- GPS Site survey and installation of datum points £1,600+VAT - Contractor
- Creation of an internal water control system. £6,082.85/Drop board sluice UNIT (max 2) Plus installation of drop board sluice and pipe under grass path x 1 £3,963.17 Plus mobilisation £650 = £16,778.87 - Contractor

Item	Cost (ex VAT)	Funding Source
Fencing & Field gate	£2,000	Existing Site Revenue Budget
Bird Screen	£500/screen x2	Existing Site Revenue Budget
GPS Survey	£1,600	External Grant Funding
Drop Board Sluices	£6,082.85/Drop board sluice x 2	External Grant Funding
Contractor Mobilisation	£3,963.17/Drop Board Sluice & Pipe under path x1 £650x1	
Total for all Proposed Works	£21, 378.87	
Total for Grant Funding	£18, 378.87	

10.2 No additional funding has been identified for taking on management of Crown Estate land and this would need to be sourced before agreeing to taking this on and would form a separate paper.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 The provision of rich green open spaces for communities is incredibly important in supporting the health and wellbeing of our communities. The provision and protection of this site ensure the Council continues its responsibilities in this regard, and to promote

the positive health benefits to our residents of our countryside site, parks and open spaces.

- 11.2 Ensuring that the site is well managed and maintained will help support creating safe, clean and green neighbourhood, which can help to reduce the fear of crime in local areas.
- 11.3 This site has particularly high-quality visual landscape benefits for the local community and visitors with sweeping views over the marsh and across the River Colne.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 The Ferry Marsh, marshland and ditches is part of the Council Water Safety review programme. Any actions recommended through the review will be actioned as appropriate.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 There is a risk that should the decision not be supported then;
- There would be continued expenditure for clearing out the sluice pipe on a more regular basis.
 - There would be potential to be unable to control flooding to the site and Wivenhoe Trail.
 - Continuation of repeating the cycle of flooding and sudden loss of water when the sluice pipe is unblocked, with potential cycle of boom and bust for aquatic biodiversity.
 - The status of the Site of Special Scientific Interest compartment is unlikely to be ever improved to 'favourable' condition.
 - Inability to fully fulfil recommendations in management plan and make the proposed biodiversity gains.
 - If the central path remains open, preventing disturbance to wildlife will be virtually impossible, potentially impacting biodiversity, and reducing breeding activity, with increased effects of dog flea treatments on aquatic life.
 - An open central path would also likely be frequently wet and impassable. Installation of a boardwalk to make it more accessible would then be high cost, with high on-going maintenance costs and make site maintenance in general more difficult.
- 13.2 In proceeding with the recommendations there is a risk that;
- We are unable to fulfil all the suggested mitigation for closing the path due to budget/funding (bird screen, resurfaced paths, internal water level management etc).
 - As there will be reduced public access to the site, with access limited to the perimeter and short loop path, this may cause complaints despite the consultation.
 - Finding ideal water levels may take time and require further level surveys which may have cost implications.
 - The Bird Screens may attract anti-social behaviour.

- There will be ongoing maintenance costs of the fences and bird screens.
- We do not find funding to take on the maintenance of the Crown Estate land and are unable to manage this as a contiguous part of the site.

13.3 Concerns have been raised that the site has a covenant on it with a designation of Public Open Space and that this prevents any restriction on use of existing paths within the site. This could be classed as a risk to the Council if they breached a Covenant, and research has been undertaken to understand the nature of such designations.

The Transfer of the land in the title is dated 29 November 1999 and it was made between (1) Wivenhoe Quay Limited (Transferor) and (2) Colchester Borough Council (Council) and it contains the following covenants:-

"The Council hereby covenants with the Transferors for the benefit of the remainder of the Retained Land as follows:

5.1 not to use the Property otherwise than for public open space

5.2 to keep the Property in a clean and tidy state and condition and to maintain the same to an appropriate standard"

Under those terms the Covenant is still capable of being enforced.

When the site was transferred it already held the status of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which it was designated in 1992.

As access is not specifically covered in the covenant and the path in question is not a Public Right of Way. The Council could make a decision to restrict access for the purposes of protecting wildlife as part of its legal obligation to manage the site effectively and appropriately to conserve the special features of the site as required by its SSSI status.

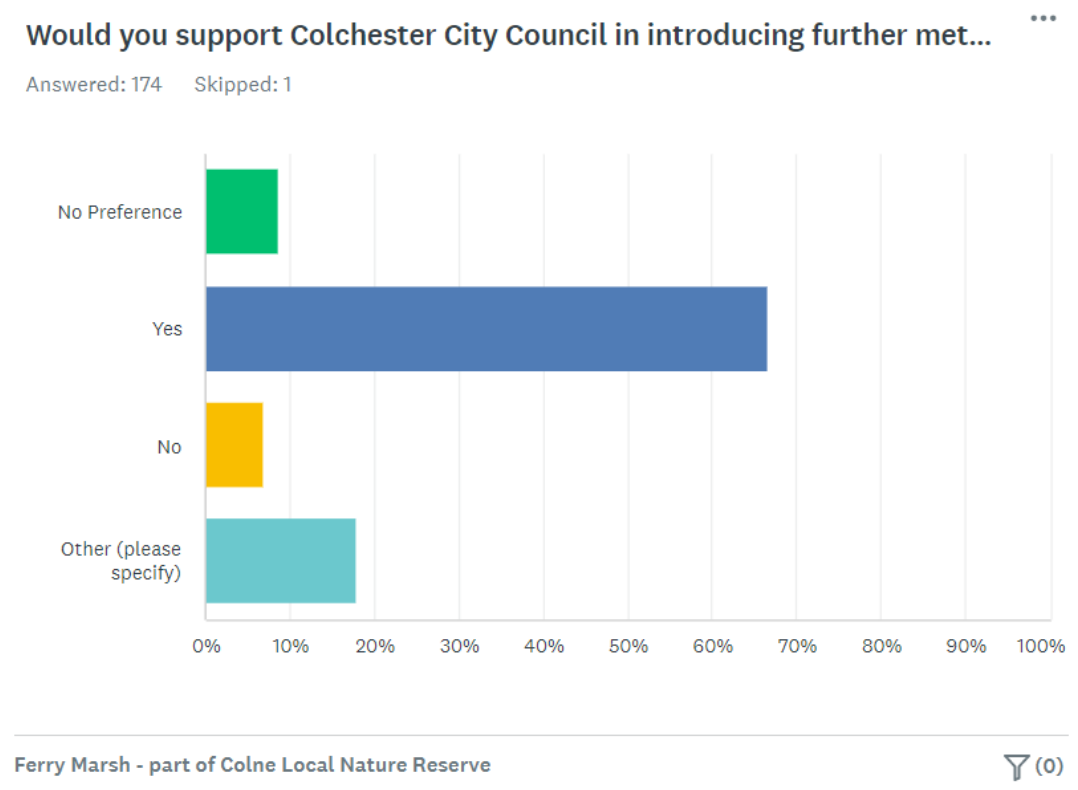
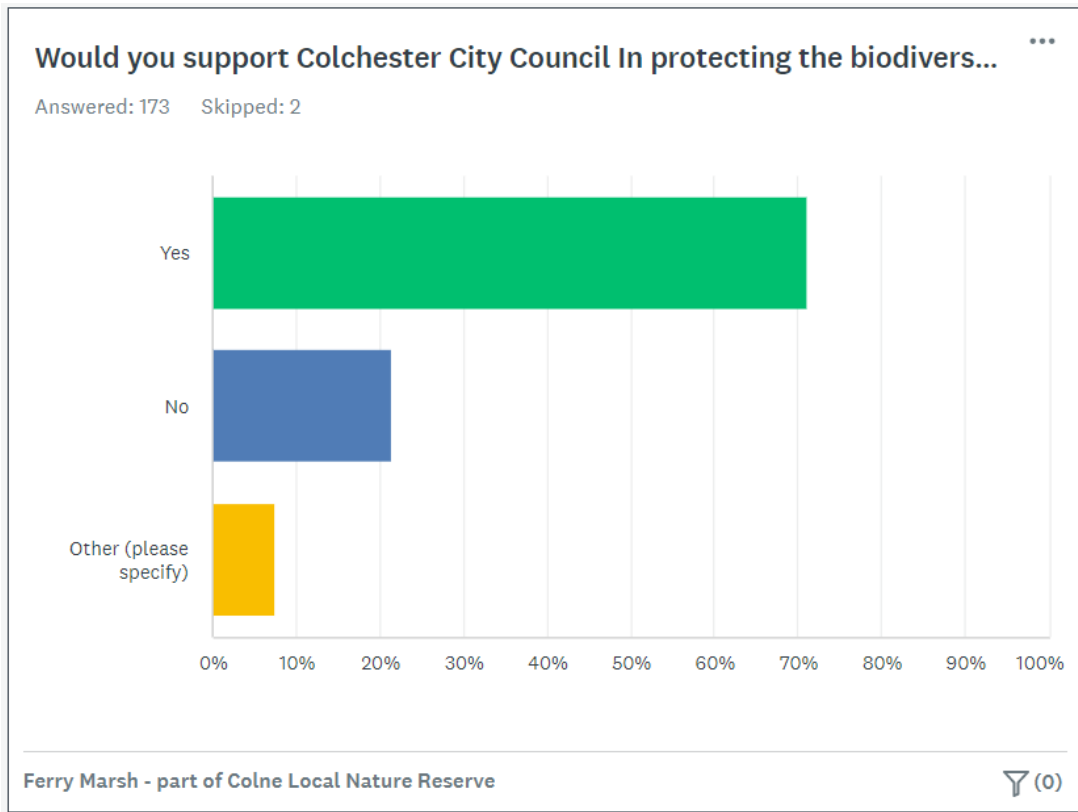
14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 The consideration of environmental and sustainability implications of the decision being taken is set out in the table below:

Sustainability theme	Positive environmental impact	Neutral impact/ Not applicable	Negative environmental impact	What are the positive and negative impacts on carbon reduction / environment?	How will positive impacts be enhanced/ encouraged? And negative impacts minimized or eliminated
Energy		✓		n/a	n/a
Waste		✓		n/a	n/a
Procurement		✓		n/a	n/a
Biodiversity and green spaces	✓			Measures proposed encourages the new wildlife to flourish, minimize the disruption to existing wildlife whilst still enabling the	

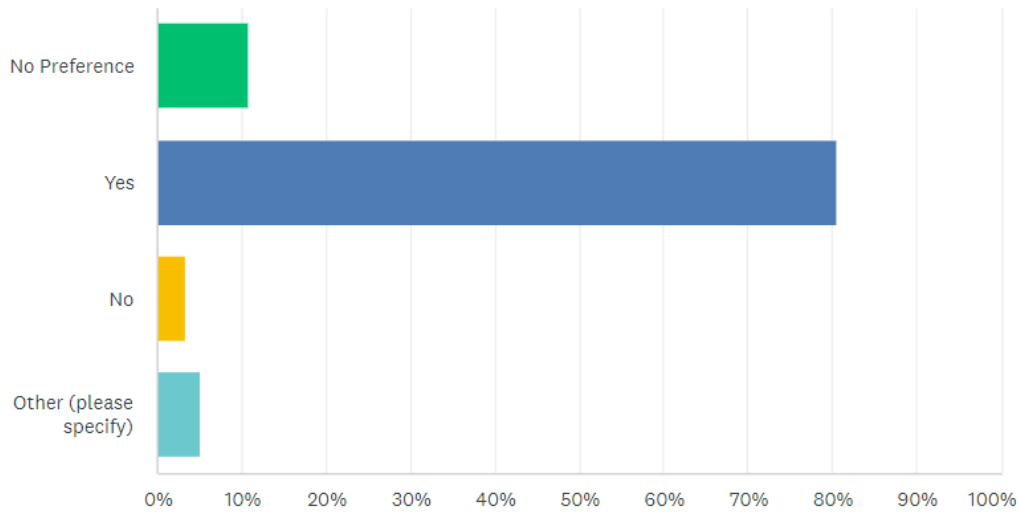
				Rangers and Volunteers to maintain the site as per the management plan, to help protect the biodiversity to continue to flourish at this site.	
Transport		✓		n/a	n/a
Adaption		✓		n/a	n/a
Water	✓			Maintaining the wetness of the site, whilst avoiding uncontrolled flooding will provide valuable fresh and brackish water habitats particularly in times of drought. Preventing dogs accessing ditches will reduce the negative effects of flea treatments on aquatic invertebrates and disturbance to waterfowl.	
Digital		✓		n/a	n/a
Community	✓			The site continues to be publicly accessible but with enhancements to the wildlife and biodiversity that the public can experience	n/a
Housing/ Development		✓		n/a	n/a
Carbon Emissions saving	✓			A wet site provides good carbon sequestration.	Rotational dredging of ditches will release carbon but very infrequently in small amounts and is outweighed by other biodiversity gains.

Appendix A – Results of consultation



The marsh does not currently include the land adjacent to Old Ferry R... ...

Answered: 175 Skipped: 0

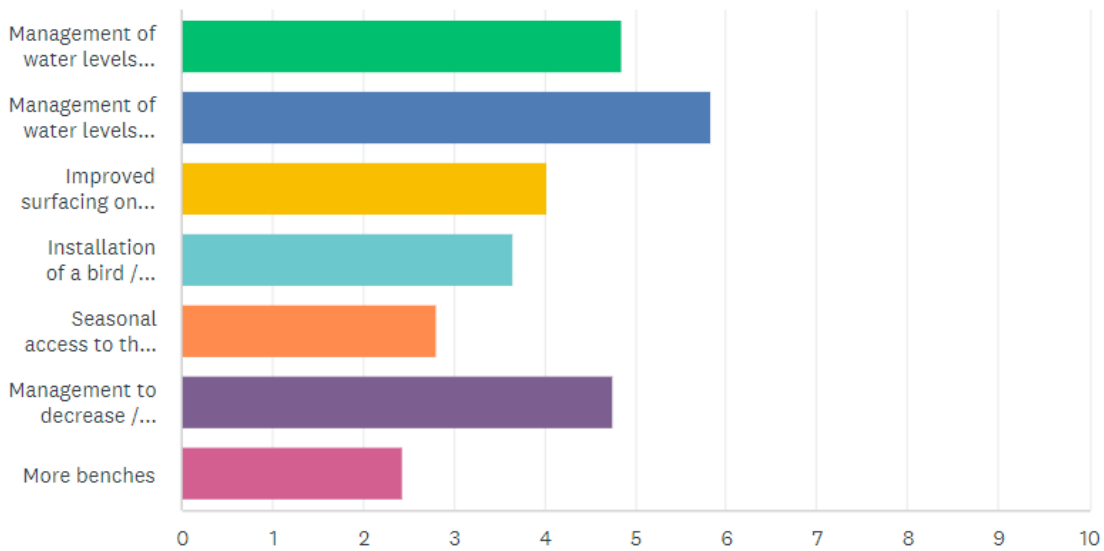


Ferry Marsh - part of Colne Local Nature Reserve

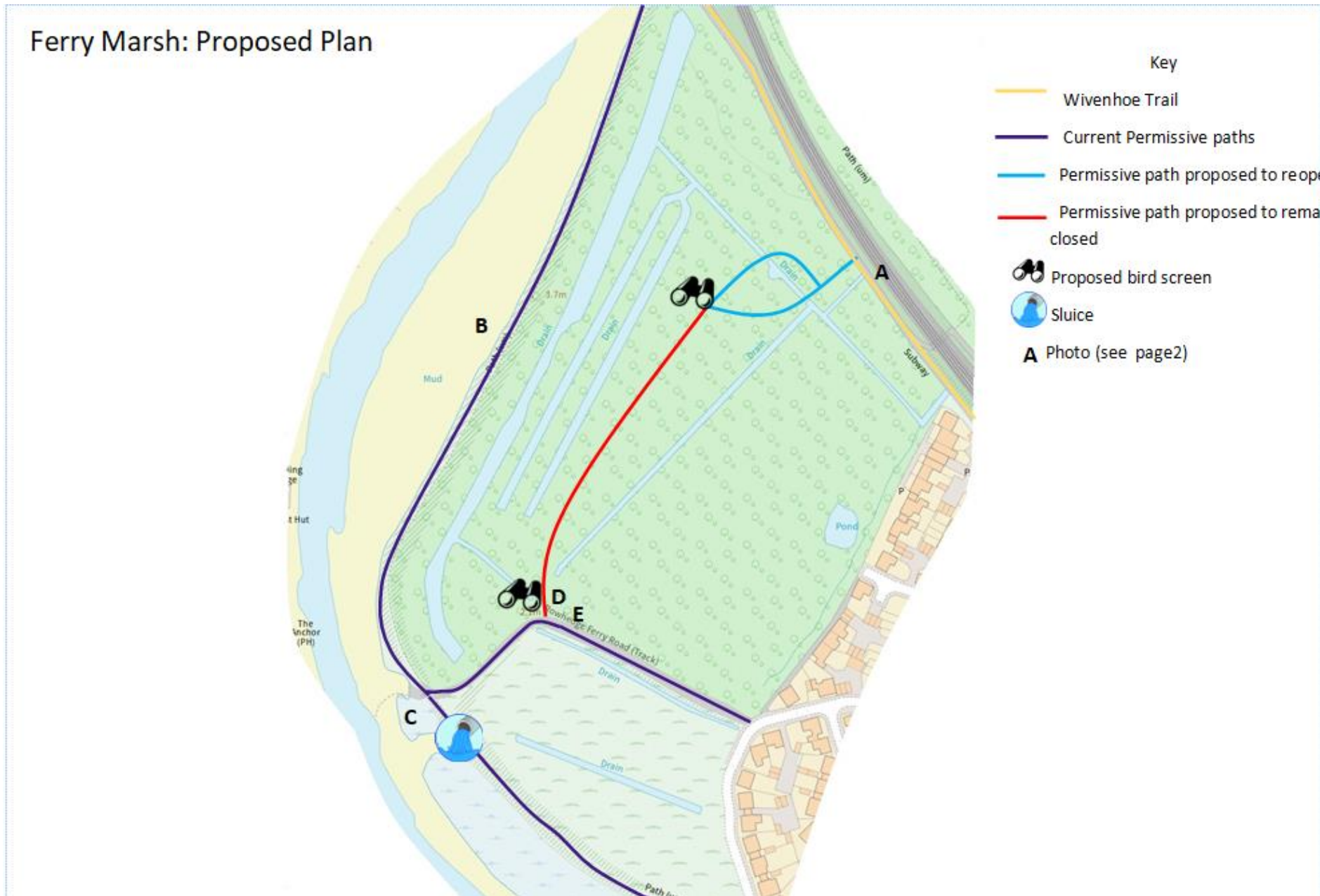
(0)

What improvements would you like to see made at Ferry Marsh? Pleas... ...

Answered: 175 Skipped: 0



Appendix B – Site Plan Showing Proposed Path Closure & Photo Locations



Appendix C – Site Photos



Top Left: Looking in to Ferry Marsh from Wivenhoe Trail

Top Right: Looking across Ferry Marsh from the river wall path

Bottom Left: Looking down Old Ferry Road Track from River Wall

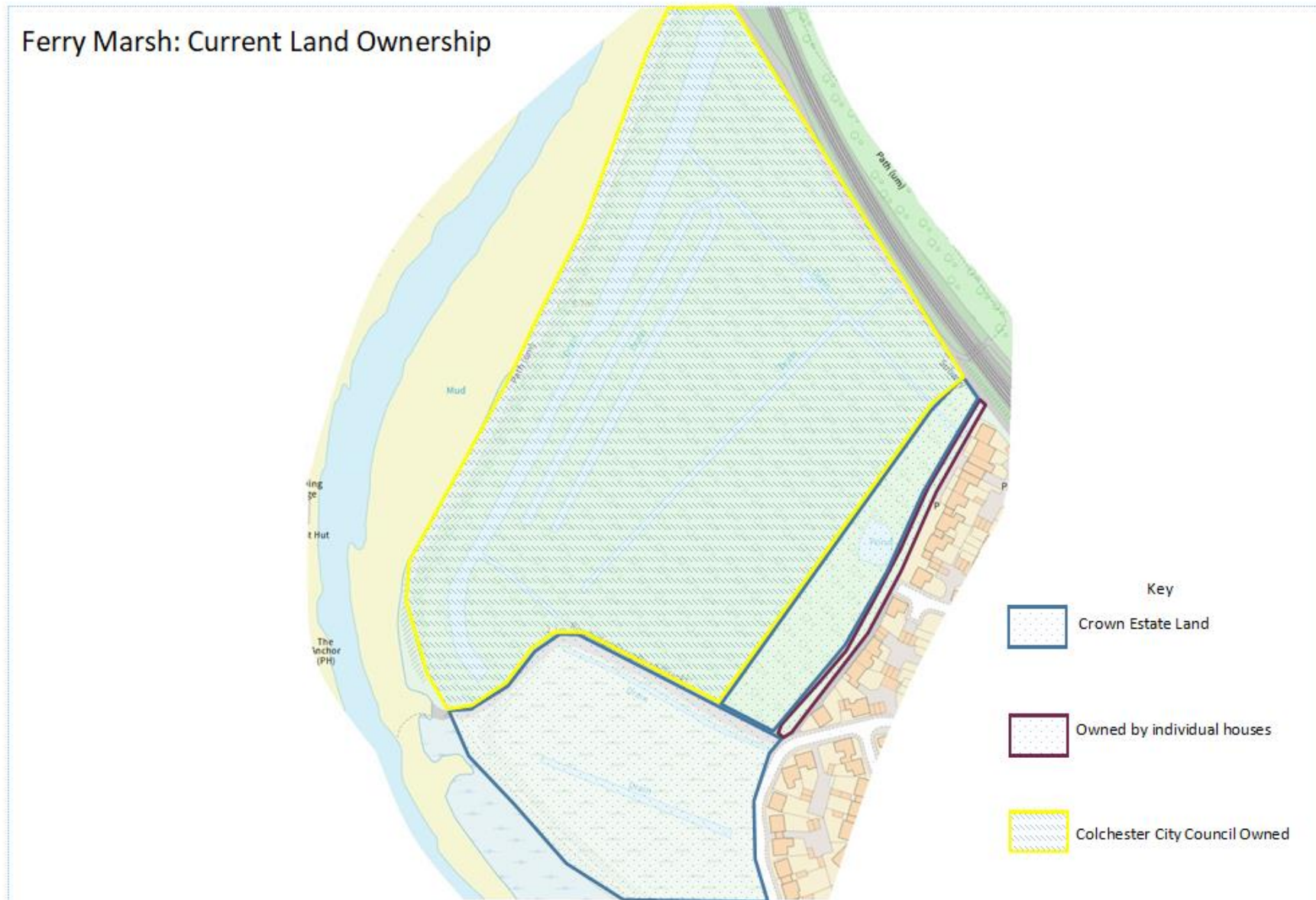


Top Left: Looking in to Ferry Marsh from Old Ferry Road Track

Bottom Right: Looking along Old Ferry Road Track towards road



Appendix D – Current Land Ownership



5th June 2024

Report of	Head of Health Partnerships and Wellbeing	Author	Tom Tayler
Title	St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre Investment		
Wards affected	Highwoods		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for an investment of £200k into St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre to support its provision of community facilities for those in North Colchester.
- 1.2 The investment into St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre is in lieu of the proposed St Marks Community Facility that had been conceptually developed for the site of the old Mill Road Rugby Club. Due to significant increase in materials and construction costs this project was paused and will be considered again as part of the wider Northern Gateway Master Plan. However, an investment into local community facilities is still required.
- 1.3 If approved, the £200,000 investment into the scheme will be added to the Council's Capital Programme for 2024/25.

The scheme will be financed from:

- Available Section 106 Receipts (£18,000); and
- (assumed) External Borrowing (£186,000).

Borrowing £186,000 has an ongoing revenue cost over 20 years. Interest on the borrowing will have to be paid and the Council will also need to set aside a statutory provision from revenue each year to repay the principal element of any loan (known as "Minimum Revenue Provision" or "MRP"). Based on prevailing interest rates as of 19th April 2024, the overall annual revenue cost is estimated to be £17,990 as follows:

Revenue Consequences of Capital Investment (due to Borrowing Requirement)	Estimated Revenue Cost (£'s)
Borrowing Costs – Interest	9,390
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	8,600
Annual Revenue Cost (Total)	17,990

- 1.4 The MRP period and life assumption may be revised on review. Regardless the investment will extend the life and improve the condition and viability of the existing community facility, with works to replace the boiler (to improve heating efficiency and costs) make roof repairs and improvements to the car park or other parts of the centre.
- 1.5 There are no alternative options if this is rejected. St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre will continue to provide provision and facilities for residents and community groups but their longer-term viability could be affected and they would need to seek

alternative investment for any of the proposed upcoming developments / repairs.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 It is recommended that the £200,000, as detailed above, is committed to the St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre to be invested in improving available facilities and that the scheme be added to the Council's Capital Programme for 2024-25.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The reason for this recommended decision is to continue to provide investment and opportunity for improvement and development into Community Facilities within North Colchester. This is to ameliorate the impact of the pausing of the potential St Marks/Old Rugby Club site development. This development has now been paused and will be considered again as part of the wider Northern Gateway Master Plan.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There are no alternative options if this is not agreed. The £14,000.00 can still be provided for the Community Centre but the Council is unable to offer any other alternatives for the remaining financial requirements. St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre will need to continue to provide provision and facilities for residents and community groups however they will need to seek alternative investment for any of the proposed upcoming developments / repairs.
- 4.2 There is a current existing draft S106 agreement for Colchester Northern Gateway (CNG) south that has a clause to provide £200k towards a community centre on site. There would be an option to explore this being redirected to St Johns & Highwoods Community Centre via the S106 agreement that follows as part of the reserved matters submissions in due course. This assumes that the existing hybrid planning permission will be implemented. A new scheme with a significant housing element could also seek to provide an enhanced community facility at Highwoods as opposed to onsite as planned. These options are subject to longer term plans and timescales with an estimated release of contributions in 4-5 years. Consequently, this not considered to meet the needs of this project at the current time.

5. Background Information

5.1 This report is to provide an overview with decision recommendation for Cabinet in relation to an investment of £200k to St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre to support its provision and community facilities for those in North Colchester.

5.2 The investment into St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre is in lieu of the proposed St Marks Community Facility that has been conceptually developed for the site of the old Mill Road Rugby Club. Due to enhancements in materials and manufacturing costs this was paused and will be considered again as part of the wider Northern Gateway Master Plan. However, an investment into local community facilities is still desired.

5.3 As part of the £200k investment from Colchester City Council we have been able to offset:

- £14,000.00 - S106 Community Contribution funding that has been aligned from a nearby development (Old Betts Factory site)
- This leaves a balance of £186k to be allocated from the Capital Programme budget in 2024/25 budget.

5.4 The investment will extend the life and improve the condition and viability of the existing community facility, with works to replace the boiler and make roof repairs and improvements to the car park or other parts of the centre.

5.5 Section 106 contributions are normally aligned to additional works, extensions and new projects to increase capacity but is appropriate in this case as the “purpose” includes enhancements to the building that will enable increased usage and that fits with the project and requirement needs put forward from Highwoods CC.

5.6 There are no alternative options if this is rejected. St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre will continue to provide provision and facilities for residents and community groups but their longer-term viability could be affected and they would need to seek alternative investment for any of the proposed upcoming developments / repairs.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 As this is an investment and not a new policy and / or major change an EIA is not required at this point. St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre may need to devise this themselves before commencement of the project.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 This decision directly relates to “Creating Safe, Health, Active Communities” as it will contribute to an enhancement of a facility that residents and community groups can access for various initiatives and programmes. In addition to this some of the proposed works to the facility including upgrading some systems will contribute to “Tackling Climate Change and Leading Sustainability”.

8. Consultation

8.1 Consultation and discussions have taken place with selected ward members, officers and representatives from St Johns and Highwoods Community Centre.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 There has been previous press interest linked to the proposed St Marks development that is now unattainable so it would be reasonable to expect there may be some media interest in this as will be linked.

10. Financial implications

10.1 If approved, the £200,000 investment into the scheme will be added to the Council’s Capital Programme for 2024/25.

The scheme will be financed from:

- Available Section 106 Receipts (£14,000); and
- (assumed) External Borrowing (£186,000).

Borrowing £186,000 has an ongoing revenue cost over 20 years. Interest on the borrowing will have to be paid and the Council will also need to set aside a statutory provision from revenue each year to repay the principal element of any loan (known as “Minimum Revenue Provision” or “MRP”). Based on prevailing interest rates as of 19th April 2024, the overall annual revenue cost is estimated to be £17,990 as follows:

Revenue Consequences of Capital Investment (due to Borrowing Requirement)	Estimated Revenue Cost (£'s)
Borrowing Costs – Interest	9,390
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	8,600
Annual Revenue Cost (Total)	17,990

10.2 The wider financial implication is that the originally proposed St Marks project will now not be taking place so originally planned investment allocation has been removed from the Medium-Term Financial Forecast and Capital Investment Programme.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 Not Applicable.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 This investment will improve the health and safety measures within the current facility.

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 Not Applicable.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 This investment will improve the environmental and sustainability features of the current facility.

15 May 2024

Report of	Head of Sustainability	Author	Adam Norris, Mel Rundle & Lucie Breadman
Title	Procurement - Direct Award Contract for Main Contractor of Fieldgate Quay Repair and Development work		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Quayside of the Fieldgate site formerly leased to C-Truks Marine Services, in the Hythe area of Colchester City is in urgent need of repair following the failure of a 15-metre section of the Sheet Piling which has collapsed into the river Colne. The remaining 235-metre section has also begun to pull away from the Quayside meaning further collapse is imminent. This presents serious health and safety concerns and has led to the diversion of a public footpath.
- 1.2 The project is currently split into 2 phases. The 1st phase is to repair the failed 15-metre section in a “like for like” fashion; this has been agreed with the local Planning team. The 2nd phase is to re-develop the remaining 235-metre section and re-naturalise the site by removing the failing sheet piling to grade back the bank and re-instate the footpath along the top of the newly formed bank.
- 1.3 The Council’s Capital Programme includes £4m for the estimated cost of repair works (approved through Full Council Budget Setting process) but given the amount of spend Cabinet approval is required.
- 1.4 Following relevant survey work and detailed design the fixed cost for Phase 1 is £905,000. Survey work and Design for Phase 2 is on-going but as the works area is far larger than that of phase 1 with large volumes of soil needing to be removed, it is projected the overall value of the project (both phases) will be circa £3.8 million. Therefore, a budget of £4 million provides contingency if required.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 Due to the value of the project/appointment being over £500k, it is recommended that the PFH is assigned delegated authority in relation to Phase 1 and Phase 2.
- 2.2 That approval is given to combine both phases into one Design and Build JCT 2016 Contract and make a direct appointment to Henderson & Taylor Ltd.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 This recommendation is being made due to the overall cost of the works required, along with the on-going health and safety issues the failing sheet piling is presenting and the need to repair as soon as possible.

- 3.2 Movement sensors have been placed along the Quayside which have demonstrated the remaining sheet piles are pulling away from the quay and starting to collapse. Essentially the longer the site is left to deteriorate, the more work will be required to complete the development. This will inevitably lead to increased health and safety issues, complaints from local residents and a higher cost to the project due to the increased complexity of the work required.
- 3.3 Henderson & Taylor Ltd are an approved supplier to Colchester City Council and have carried out many projects on their behalf. They have very good experience of this type of project and the local area having completed sheet piling repair works along the river Colne in the past. The cost's they have submitted to date in relation to Phase 1 have been scrutinised and deemed competitive.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Engage in full Procurement process projected to last 3-4 months. This would risk further collapse and more expense due to the added complications a collapse would create. It is also unlikely that any extended procurement process would provide more choice in contractor or reduced costs due to the specialist nature of the works required.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Council owns the section of quayside known as Fieldgate Quay which forms part of a former commercial harbour located on the tidal section of the River Colne. In November 2020 Officers were notified of a collapse to a section of steel piled river wall adjacent to the site leased to Alnmaritec operating as CTruks Marine Services. This was caused by a failure of the wall anchor system and the corrosion of sheet piles from which the wall is largely constructed. The sheet piles bowed and protruded out into the river. The section of quay behind the failure point subsequently subsided including the collapse of a public right of way running alongside the wall which has remained closed since. Monitoring of the full quayside was undertaken, and movement was detected in several other locations with piling beginning to deflect away from the quay. There is one area (Phase 2) of more significant movement and concern remains this area will fail similarly to the section further upriver. An outlet pipe serving the sewage treatment works operated by Anglia Water is located close to the section of failed sheet piling. The outlet is part of a significant separate concrete construction set back from the river wall and is in sound structural condition with no evidence to suggest the failed steel piling is compromising the outlet structure.
- 5.2 The site has been cleared of the industrial waste left by the previous tenant, a small office building situated adjacent to the collapsed section has been demolished to allow the main contractor to effect repairs, and the public footpath which had been closed, has been temporarily re-routed through the main site via a fenced corridor.
- 5.3 Specialist Environmental consultants have been appointed to assess the site and propose meaningful development options which meet the project objectives of stabilising the site, re-naturalising as much as possible and moving the footpath back onto its original route along the top of the quayside.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 Further collapse of the quayside will bring more complications, cost and complexity. Making the direct award to Henderson & Taylor for both phases of the project will limit the risk of escalating costs a further collapse would create.

6.2 The overall estimated budget for Fieldgate Quay is £4,000,000. The project (P1 & 2) forms part of the Council's Capital Programme, funded by borrowing and have been agreed as part of the budget setting process by Full Council.

7. Risk Management Implications

7.1 There are financial risks of escalating costs should the project be delayed, alongside the health and safety risks mentioned above.

8. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

8.1 Through re-naturalizing large sections of this former industrial site the project will support local eco-systems and return much of the quayside to its original state. This is in line with the council's Climate Emergency ambitions.

8.2 The swift appointment of Henderson & Taylor will remove the health and safety hazards presented by the current collapsed section (Phase 1) and will greatly mitigate the risks presented by further collapse within the Phase 2 area. This will also allow the re-opening this section of Quayside to the public to enjoy.

9.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

9.1 Through the Council's Procurement Strategy, Officers will ensure that all procurement and purchasing documentation recognises, understands, and supports the Council's policies with regards to equal opportunities, diversity, and human rights.

10. Publicity Considerations

10.1 For those residents living, working or commuting through the area along with businesses located in the Hythe area a Taskforce was developed made up of key stakeholders, working together to address key issues linked to flooding in the area. This Taskforce has provided a useful means of updating on progress around the failure of the wall along Fieldgate Quay. Regular press updates have also been issued.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 Failure of the Quayside resulted in loss of public amenity and walkway through the area and while this has been re-routed residents are keen to see the quayside route back in action once the repairs are completed.

12. Risk Management and Health and Safety Implications

12.1 The initial failure did pose a severe health and safety risk and was quickly closed off from the public and has remained so. Moving swiftly to repair mitigates against further risk and health and safety implications and combining Phase 1 and 2 also aims to reduce the time it will take, thus minimising further failure.

Extract from the draft minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 12 March 2024

459. Local Highways Panel

Apologies had been received from Councillor Sue Lissimore, Chair of the Local Highways Panel, and Jane Thompson, Transport and Sustainability Joint Lead. Both had intended to be present but were unable to attend due to illness.

Councillor David King, Leader of the Council, explained that the report looked at the Council's relationship with Essex Highways. Responsibility for highways matters lay with Essex County Council, so questions could be framed as to how the City Council approached the Local Highways Panel, with changes underway regarding how highways work is carried out. It was expected that the ramifications for the Local Highways Panel [LHP] would be seen later in March 2024. The Council had limited influence, but the report presented that it was doing what it could do.

Matthew Brown, Economic Regeneration Manager, explained that the LHP looked at small-scale capital infrastructure projects, such as bus stops, cycle paths, and tackling local hotspots. The Council did not contribute funding since 2018-19, but did influence works via the LHP.

A Panel member noted the share of Council tax which went to Essex County Council [ECC], and asked whether devolution of highways maintenance to the City Council be workable. The Leader stated that ECC accepted the arguments in favour of devolution, but the question was how to carry out devolution in a practical way. The redevelopment of St. Nicholas Square was a good example of collaborative work with ECC. The Leader asked the Panel to consider what competencies the Council could add to the relevant team to help the Council achieve works in a simpler way, with a possible way forward for the Council to have an arrangement to do some highways work within Colchester. Lindsay Barker, Deputy Chief Executive, noted that Essex devolution was currently on hold, but it was hoped that it would be returned unto. Conversations continued across North Essex councils, seeking greater decision making in the area. Councils were making the most of current arrangements to influence and have an effect on decision making, seeing successes.

A Panel member asked why the budget for LHPs had been cut from £4m to £2m, with the Colchester LHP budget dropping from £0.5m to £0.25m. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that ECC had the same budget pressures as the Council, but with around 80% of their budget going into adult social care or into caring for SEND [Special educational needs and disabilities] children. ECC were seeking all possible ways to save money. The Council had a good record of gaining highways funding, but needed to be clear in its prioritisations. The Leader explained that there was an agreement in principle, between the Council and ECC, on a capital programme for Colchester centre in the Summer.

A Panel member raised concern that there might be a disconnect between the Council's Planning Team, and ECC Highways, where new housing developments were not matched by transport infrastructure improvements.

The Economic Regeneration Manager clarified that Colchester, Chelmsford and Basildon together received 12.5% of the overall Essex budget for LHPs. A Panel member asked if the Council could contribute funding to the LHP. The Deputy Chief Executive cautioned that this would generate difficult questions as to why the Council would be funding a function of the County Council. Another Panel member suggested that the Panel should recommend that Cabinet reinstates its £100k per year funding of the LHP, and that resource should be found for this. This was compared to the £7.7m agreed in the 2024-25 Budget for highways spending by the Council, on a specific local project. The Panel member suggested that this work be cancelled and the money used elsewhere.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted that the Council had just passed a Budget which would require a restructure, under very challenging circumstances. The £7.7m spending allocated to highways work around the Northern Gateway site was to be an investment in access to the biggest of the Council's assets. A Panel member countered with a request for priority to instead be given to matters of concern to residents, such as to minimise damage to vehicles from poorly maintained roads.

Other Panel members pointed out that ECC received a far greater share of Council Tax than the City Council received, for providing different services, which gave rise to caution as to whether the Council should provide funding for an ECC function. An alternative suggestion was made, that it would be preferable for ECC to restore its funding of LHPs to the previous level, of £0.5m

The Panel considered possible issues regarding how the LHP explained its work, to show the public what it was doing. A Panel member argued that the LHP's reputation did not engender confidence in it and whether it performed effectively. The Deputy Chief Executive noted that the request for better communication of the LHP's work could be passed on to the Chair of the LHP. The Chairman suggested that the Chair of the LHP could be asked to provide more information on its working, and on how this could be advertised. Owen Howell, Democratic Services Officer, noted that the Panel had no mechanism to make formal recommendations directly to the Local Highways Panel. The Chairman therefore pledged to write to Councillor Lissimore to make an informal request for more information on the LHP's work to be communicated, both to the Panel and to the public.

RECOMMENDED that CABINET consider authorising Council funding to be provided to the Local Highways Panel, as had previously been done up to 2018-19.

Extract from the draft minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee meeting of 9 April 2024

424. Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/2023

The Committee considered a report asking that it note the Council's uncertified draft statement of accounts 2022/2023 which has now been published.

The Chair took the opportunity to remind the Committee of its Terms of Reference, and in particular the responsibility of the Committee to consider and approve the Council's statement of accounts, and to review the Council's external auditors annual audit letter. The Committee was reminded of the difficulties which the Council had experienced in obtaining audited accounts on time, or at all, for a number of years in common with local authorities across the Country. The Chair attended meetings of Audit Committee Chairs when these were held, and at the most recent meeting had asked whether it was possible to appoint a local accountancy firm to carry out the Council's audit. Sadly, this was categorically not possible, as there were statutory provisions for the auditing of accounts and a limited number of firms authorised to undertake the audit of local authority accounts. It was suggested that it was intended to complete the outstanding audit by September 2024, and the Committee was reminded that the accounts which were before it were un-audited accounts. The Chair was, however, certain that the information which had been presented to the Committee, with the possible exception of minor typographical errors, was accurate, and he saw no reason for concern. A Committee member had submitted extensive queries in relation to the draft accounts ahead of the meeting, and responses to these had been prepared by the Deputy S151 Officer. Both the questions and answers had been shared with the Committee.

Chris Hartgrove, Deputy S151 Officer attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Committee with its enquiries. The Committee heard that the draft statement of accounts for 2022/2023 which was before it had been prepared in compliance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)'s guidance, which related specifically to local authority accounting which was different from the private sector in many respects. Appropriate technical advice had been sought when necessary in relation to matters such as taxation, valuations, treasury management and investment recognition and collection fund accounting. The Committee was invited to note that the draft accounts had been published prior to consideration by the Council's external auditors, BDO. The role of the external auditors was to review the draft accounts to determine whether they represented a true and fair view of the Council's financial position at that date. The role of the auditor was to report to the Committee and provide it with a statement on the accuracy of the draft accounts prepared by Officers. A statement by the auditor would be presented to the Committee alongside a set of financial accounts, amended if necessary, and the Committee would then be asked to adopt these. Once adopted as the final set of accounts by the Council and the auditor was satisfied that any concerns raised had been corrected within the bounds of materiality, the auditor would sign the final accounts as a true and fair view. The Committee was reminded that the auditor was working for it to provide assurance of

the accuracy of the accounts prepared by Officers. Local government accounting was extremely complex, and therefore the auditors had the requirement to provide technical and professional assurance that the appropriate rules had been correctly applied. Any challenge to the draft accounts at this stage would only be followed by a more rigorous and thorough review of their accuracy by the auditors, before a final set of accounts was presented to the Committee after the audit process had been completed. The Committee was advised that any detailed review of the draft accounts at this stage added little value as any errors in the accounts would be identified and reported to the Committee together with an amended set of accounts. Recognising that this was the first stage of a very thorough process, the Committee was simply asked to note the accounts.

Councillor Willetts was attending the meeting as a substitute, and requested that it be specifically recorded in the minutes that as a substitute he had not been in receipt of the questions which had been asked prior to the meeting, or the answers which had been provided to the Committee, and therefore considered it unfair if the debate was to be restricted to these questions. At the request of the Chair, the email containing both the questions and the answers provided was emailed to Councillor Willetts by the Democratic Services Officer during the meeting.

A Committee member acknowledged that he had posed a number questions before the meeting, and that the Deputy S151 Officer had been very generous in replying, however, he still had serious concerns about the accounts which had been presented to the Committee. These were the only external control for the Council, as the Council did not appear to have cash or borrowing restraints, and it was the audited accounts which told the Council where the boundaries of its behaviour lay. He was unable to reconcile the draft statement of accounts to the budgeting reports which had been presented to the Committee at previous meetings. It was time for the Council to decide whether it wished to simply accept the position with the delay in providing audited accounts, or actively seek a resolution to the position. He was very concerned about accepting the proposed disclaimed audit opinions, and considered that the Committee needed to take this possibility very seriously indeed, and take as much time as was required at the meeting to put forward a real plan to deal with this issue.

The Deputy S151 Officer addressed the issue of a potentially disclaimed audit opinion, and the Committee heard that in this context the external auditors were awaiting specific professional guidance to enable them to issue a disclaimed opinion. He had been advised by BDO that any such opinion would be risk based and would completely comply with the auditing guidance they had been given. The Committee was assured that the accounts could not therefore be signed off without any assurance, albeit limited, being provided. With regard to the current status of the audit, BDO had expressed a hope that the 2020/2021 accounts would be signed off as quickly as possible; the audit work was substantially complete and the audit partner had now returned to work following a planned career break and would be in a position to complete the audit by carrying out a review of the audit work which had been completed. BDO had stated that they intended to sign off the accounts by the end of April, however, this was considered to be an ambitious target. With regard to the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 accounts, it was intended to proceed to gather the necessary assurance to issue a disclaimed opinion in both instances, and planning

work in this regard had already commenced. Confirmation in writing of the timeline of the planned works had been requested from BDO, and would be circulated to the Committee once this had been received. It was not considered that the reason for the delay in the audit could be attributed solely to the career break which had been taken by the audit partner of BDO.

A Committee member noted that the item which was before the Committee was simply the draft statement of accounts for 2022/2023, and the question to be considered was whether or not these accounts should be noted. Although the idea of a qualified audit opinion was very far from satisfactory, it was not felt that this was a decision over which the Council had any control, and the government, in conjunction with the Local Government Association (LGA), considered that the provision of qualified accounts was the way to deal with the huge backlog of audits which existed across the country. The Council did not have the advantage of operating in the private sector where it was possible to change auditors at will.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, attended the meeting and, with the permission of the Chair, addressed the Committee. He confirmed that both he and the Portfolio Holder for Resources took the support which they offered to the Committee very seriously. He had attended meeting of the Audit Committees of Essex County Council (ECC), and advised the Committee that the frustrations with the audit process were the same across all those Committees. The Council should seek to take advantage as much as possible from the arrangements for completing the outstanding audits which would be set out by central government.

The Chair noted that the work programme of the Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024 was on agenda this evening, and suggest that the Committee may wish to ensure that there was an item scheduled for its first meeting of the new municipal year which provided an update on the audit process for all outstanding accounts at that time. The detailed work which the Committee had undertaken over the preceding municipal year was praised, and the input of some of the new members of the Committee was singled out as having been particularly effective in scrutinising the operation of the Council's wholly owned companies. The Committee was reminded that it was being asked to note the draft accounts which were before it, and when the auditors had concluded their work and provided an audited set of accounts to the Committee, it would be able to state whether, or not, it accepted the accounts produced by the auditors were appropriate.

A Committee member did not wish to question any of the content of the draft accounts, assuming that they had been prepared to a high professional standard. However, before giving his vote to note the draft accounts, he sought clarification on some issues. He noted that Councillors had been presented with reports containing management accounts in the past, and when considering the draft accounts which were now before the Committee the income and expenditure figures which were contained in the draft accounts bore no resemblance to the management accounts which had been provided to the Committee. This caused confusion that there were different ways of expressing the Council's gross income in different documents, why did the figures in the draft statement of accounts not appear in the management accounts? Although these draft accounts would now pre-date the dormancy of the Council's wholly owned companies, at some stage in the future the position of the

accounts would need to be considered both before and after dormancy, was it possible from this set of draft accounts to clearly understand how the Council had moved into the situation of dormancy? The Chair pointed out that that the Committee had considered the Council's wholly owned companies in some detail in recent meetings, including their statements of account, and although there were potentially issues relating to possible grant repayments, the Committee was reminded that the matter before it at this meeting was the draft accounts which had been presented to it.

The Deputy S151 Officer confirmed that the statutory accounts contained a vast number of technical accounting adjustments which were required, and although the management accounts were reconcilable to the statutory accounts, these were presented in a very different format, and had been simplified to provide greater transparency. In terms of the Council's net position which impacted on its reserves, a reconciliation would be provided to the Committee to provide assurance on this point. There had been a gap between when the original outturn had been published in September 2023 and the presentation of the draft accounts, and a reconciliation would be provided in respect of this, although the Committee was assured that no material changes would result from this. The Committee noted that the way in which the quarterly outturn reports were presented to it was much more easily readable and accessible than had been the case in the past, and the work of the Finance team was praised in this regard.

A Committee member noted that the Council had to conform to the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), and suggested that to simplify the treatment of the accounts, the Council's management reporting should be aligned with these statutory standards. It was suggested that the Council was only monitoring half of its turnover, most of the reports which the Committee had considered showed turnover at around £70m or £80m, but he believed that, in reality, turnover was closer to £150m. It was necessary to demonstrate the Council's actual turnover somewhere in the management reports which were produced. He believed that it would be very worthwhile to carry out a reconciliation now, and noted the difficulties with providing the necessary resources for this. He considered that there was insufficient support from the Administration for the Council's Technical Finance Team. The Deputy S151 Officer acknowledged the suggestion of reporting on a statutory basis rather than a management accounts basis, but advised the Committee that this would be an extremely difficult task which would not ultimately enable greater understanding of the Council's accounts. It was considered that the management accounts made it easier for the Committee to monitor the position of the budget through the year which was their primary purpose. The additional value which would be provided by an in-year reconciliation was recognised if it was carried out at the appropriate time in the right level of detail. It may not be possible to carry out a reconciliation as a lot of the information required was only obtained at year end, such as annual pension adjustments. The Committee considered that the reports which were produced were at a level which could be readily understood by the majority of Councillors, and not just members of Cabinet or this Committee.

A Committee member maintained that it was essential that the management reports showed the Council's actual turnover, which had a very important legal meaning. In terms of the reconciliation which had been requested, it was suggested to the

Committee that this would be an audit test which the Council's external auditors would require to be carried out, and this work would therefore have to be undertaken in any event. Alarm was expressed about the passive stance which the Committee had taken to the problem of obtaining audited accounts, and it was suggested that a different approach was now needed. A position paper was requested dealing with the key points of disagreement which had been expressed in relation to the draft accounts which had been presented to the Committee which were major repairs, depreciation and post balance sheet events to clarify the Council's position as these were matters which would be considered by auditors. It would also be useful to prepare another, tidier, set of draft accounts prepared with input from the suggested position papers, which reconciled with the monitoring reports. The Committee was urged to take a 'carrot and stick' approach with the Council's auditors, BDO. The fee which the Council had paid to them of £39,000 was considered to be low to deal with such complicated accounts, when in the past the Audit Commission had been paid £200,000 for this work. The Council had appointed new auditors in KPMG, and it was suggested that the possibility of this firm taking over the outstanding audit work from BDO earlier than planned could be explored, as it was considered that BDO would be in breach of the contract with the Council. The suggested approach was therefore to offer the 'carrot' of an enhanced audit fee for completion of outstanding works, with the 'stick' of another firm completing this work if BDO was unable to complete it. The Council needed to be as pro-active as possible to ensure that audits were completed. It was also necessary to explore the impact of disclaimed accounts on the work which KPMG would be undertaking in the future, would this lead to further qualified audit opinions?

Noting the suggestions which had been made, the Chair invited a specific motion to be put to the Committee which clarified the recommendations which the Committee was being asked to make to Cabinet.

The Leader of the Council addressed the Committee and cautioned against the use of pejorative language when discussing the current position, as this did not reflect fairly on the hard work of staff or the administration's attitude to the situation. The Council did have to make the best of the circumstances it found itself in, and take steps to make a difference where it was able to. The Council was bound by nationally negotiated arrangements, and an industry-wide way forward had been proposed, which it was not possible to circumvent or overturn. It was difficult to see how giving more money to an auditor which had failed to deliver audited accounts could be justified. It was confirmed to the Committee that the administration would not withhold resources from the Council's Finance Team, who would be supported to carry out the work which was needed to the quality required by the auditors.

Although the Committee accepted that the Council did not necessarily have the power to directly influence the completion of the outstanding audit work, it was suggested that the Council did everything within its power to drive completion of the outstanding audit work forward as a matter of urgency.

It was very important to explore what disclaimed accounts would actually mean for the Council. If the accounts were disclaimed, would there still be an inspection period? Was it possible to try to narrow the scope of the disclaimer to keep it to as narrow a scope as possible? Would it be possible for the Council to produce the

required Annual Governance Statement is the statement of accounts had been disclaimed? What was the rarity and severity of an audit disclaimer?

The Deputy S151 Officer confirmed that KPMG had been appointed to be the Council's auditors for 2023/2024, and had already begun planning the audit for 2023/2024 with Officers. What the possibility of disclaimed opinions meant for their audit was being considered, however, guidance was awaited and it was anticipated that a method would be put in place for the 2 years following a disclaimed opinion to gradually restore full assurance. A national framework with guidance would be put in place to direct this work. With regard to inspection periods, the auditors did consider that there would be an inspection period for the financial years 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 for the Council's published accounts prior to the proposed September 30 backstop.

A motion was proposed to the Committee:

"The draft statement of accounts for 2022/2023 be noted, and that it be recommended to Cabinet that:

- Position papers on key points of disagreement were prepared, which were; major repairs, depreciation and post balance sheet events;
- A tidier set of draft accounts be produced which reconciled back to the monitoring reports;
- The consequences of disclaimed accounts be investigated and planned for."

In discussion, the Committee raised concerns about the second recommendation to Cabinet, which could be considered to be disrespectful to Officers, and which did not relate to the subject of the Officer's report, which was to note the draft accounts for 2022/2023. Support was voiced for the preparation of position papers on the main points of disagreement which had been raised. It was queried whether the Finance Team had the necessary resources to meet the expectations inherent in the proposed motion, however, the Committee did note the assurance which had been made by the Leader of the Council at the meeting, that adequate resources would be made available to the Team to meet its obligations. The Committee was concerned to investigate the issue of whether accounts with a disclaimer would on some way impede the Council's new auditors in carrying out audits. It recognised the risk of noting a set of accounts which turned out to not be acceptable to the new auditors because of disclaimer issues, was it possible to narrow the terms of the disclaimer to ensure that the accounts were of use to KPMG?

The Deputy S151 Officer supported the suggestion that the possibility of narrowing the terms of the disclaimer be investigated. With regard to the debate in relation to the preparation of position papers, the Committee was advised that a revision or re-preparation of the accounts together with a reconciliation would all form part of the Council's audit process, and so this would be a duplication of process when the primary focus of the Finance Team at present was preparing the 2023/2024 financial statements, and staff would have to be re-directed from this task to produce the reports suggested. The Committee noted the duplication of work which the suggested preparation of a tidier set of accounts would entail, and was content to remove this suggestion from the tabled motion as it recognised that this work would

have to be carried out as part of the usual audit process. Consequently, the motion before the Committee was amended to:

“The draft statement of accounts for 2022/2023 be noted, and that it be recommended to Cabinet that:

- Position papers on key points of disagreement were prepared, which were; major repairs, depreciation and post balance sheet events;
- The Cabinet investigate and plan for the consequences of disclaimed accounts.”

Recognising the differences of opinion which had been expressed during the debate, the Committee resolved to vote on the 2 suggested recommendations to Cabinet separately.

When considering whether or not to note the statement of accounts, Councillor Willetts called for a named vote in accordance with the Council’s General Meeting Procedure Rules 9(3), and this request was supported by Councillor Sunnucks and Councillor Naylor.

Those in favour of noting the accounts:

Councillor Smith
Councillor Jay
Councillor Harris
Councillor Pearson

Those against noting the accounts:

Councillor Sunnucks
Councillor Naylor
Councillor Willetts

RESOLVED that: the draft statement of accounts 2022/2023 be noted, prior to the completion of the external audit process.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that: the consequences of disclaimed accounts be investigated and planned for.

5 June 2024

Report of	Democratic Services Manager	Author	Richard Clifford ☎ 507832
Title	Member Development Group Annual Report 2023-24		
Wards affected	'Not applicable'		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of the Member Development Group is to provide a forum where members can advise on the planning, delivery and evaluation of member development activities. It is an all-party group and is chaired by the portfolio holder with responsibility for member development. The Group is required to report to Cabinet on an annual basis. This report meets this requirement and summarises the work of the Group during the 2023-24 municipal year. The Annual Report sets out information on the provision of member development, expenditure on the member development budget and the position on Councillor Development Charter Status.

2. Recommended Decision

2.1 To receive and note the report of the Member Development Group on the work of the Group in the 2023-24 municipal year.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

3.1 The Member Development Group is required to report to Cabinet on an annual basis. This provides Cabinet with an opportunity to review the work of the Group and the provision of member development.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 No alternative options are presented.

5. Background Information

5.1 The Annual Report of the Member Development Group for 2023 -24 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. This sets out information about the background to the group and its terms of reference and composition. It summarises the main areas of work undertaken by the Group and provides information about the range of development activities undertaken by members of Colchester City Council in 2023-24.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 An EQIA for the councillor development policy has been prepared and can be accessed via the link below.

<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2290&p=0>

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 Member development supports all the Strategic Plan priorities by promoting the skills and knowledge members need in order to fulfil their roles effectively.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The Annual Report sets out expenditure against the member development budget for the 2023-24 municipal year. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Standard References

9.1 There are no particular references to consultation or publicity considerations or community safety; health and safety, environmental sustainability or risk management implications.

Appendix 1 – Member Development Group Annual Report

Member Development Group: Report to Cabinet 2023-24

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Member Development Group is to provide a forum where members can advise on the planning, delivery and evaluation of member development activities. The Group consists of the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for member development who acts as Chair of the Group, and a member of each political group. In 2023-24 the Group was chaired by Councillor Alison Jay, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Transformation and Performance.

The Group is required to report to Cabinet on an annual basis. This report meets this requirement and summarises the work of the Group during the 2023-24 municipal year.

2. Terms of Reference

The Group's Terms of Reference are as follows:-

The Member Development Group will advise on the planning, delivery and evaluation of member development activities and make recommendations to Cabinet where appropriate. The Member Development Group will report to Cabinet on an annual basis.

The membership of the Member Development Group will be the relevant Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Member Development and one member from each political group represented on the Council. The Group will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder. Members of the Group will be responsible for the promotion of Member Development within their political group.

The Member Development Group will:-

- oversee the provision of member development opportunities;
- advise on policies and procedures relating to member development; and monitor their implementation and effectiveness;
- regularly review the level and allocation of the Councillor development budget;
- oversee the evaluation of member development opportunities and assess the contribution of member development opportunities towards the Council's corporate objectives;
- ensure that Councillor Development Charter Status is maintained and monitor the progress of the implementation of the recommendations from the Charter Assessment.

3. Composition

The membership of the Group in 2023-24 was as follows:-

Councillor Alison Jay, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Transformation and Performance , Chair
 Councillor Michelle Burrows (Liberal Democrat)
 Councillor Mark Goacher (Green)
 Councillor David Harris (Labour)
 Councillor Leigh Tate (Conservative)

The Group has been supported by Hayley McGrath, Corporate Governance Manager, Richard Clifford, Democratic Services Manager and Matt Evans, Democratic Services Officer.

The Group has met on four occasions in 2023 -24:

20 September 2023
 15 November 2023
 31 January 2024
 26 March 2024

4. Main Areas of Work

4.1 The Provision of Member Development

Full details of attendance at member development sessions for 2023-24 are available [here](#). The attendance figures are positive and whilst the total number of sessions attended is slightly down from last municipal year, the figures continue to demonstrate a healthy interest in training and development across the Council.

Measurable objectives were established by the Group to help measure the provision of and attendance at member development sessions and performance against these objectives is shown below. The figures for 2022-23 are also included for comparison and to indicate trends.

	Target	2022-23	2023-24
Number of Councillors attending one or more Development Session	80%	96%	98%
Number of Councillors attending 5 or more Development Sessions	25%	78%	75%
Number of Development Sessions or Briefings provided for Councillors over the course of a municipal year	10	36	34
Number of Councillors who have completed Leadership Academy programme during the course of the Municipal Year	1	-	-

The programme of member development has provided briefings to keep members up to date on key Council projects and initiatives.

A key element of the member development programme in 2023-24 has been the continuation of the Chief Executive briefings and budget workshop programme which were successfully introduced in recent years. The Chief Executive briefings provide a regular opportunity for all members to hear from the Chief Executive on topical issues. The subjects covered have included housing pressures, changes to arrangements for postal votes and proxies, RAAC, the corporate landlord programme and the estate strategy.

A number of briefings have been held to keep members up to date on “hot topics” and important initiatives by the Council and partners such as the Rural Prosperity Fund, Sustainability, Transport and Climate Change and Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy. Some of these sessions directly enable members to better help the residents they represent.

A number of Councillors have also taken advantage of external training opportunities offered by national sector organisations such as the Local Government Association. This has included sessions on Preventing Radicalisation, Communications and Political Leadership and Being an Effective Cabinet Member.

The Group also considered and approved a request from the Environment and Sustainability Panel for specialist carbon literacy training. The aim was to enable better understanding of carbon science and to provide panel members with a base of knowledge to enable them to question, make judgements and advise staff about the Council’s work on climate change, as well as being able to assess the views expressed by members of the public speaking under ‘Have Your Say!’ at public meetings on climate change issues. The training was delivered over two sessions in January and February and the sessions were opened out to all councillors with 12 councillors attending one or both sessions.

Planning and licensing training has also been provided to ensure that members are kept up to date with developments in these fields and to ensure that there is a wide pool of members able to sit on the Planning and Licensing Committees. The Group was also involved in the planning of the induction process for new councillors elected in May 2024.

The Group has also considered the provision of training and development on equality, diversity and inclusion and also on mental health support and as a consequence these issues will be included as key elements of the member development programme in 2024-25.

The Group also examined a number of policy or procedural issues relating to member development to try and improve processes and access to member development. These have included:-

- changes to the nomination process for places at Leadership Academy;
- etiquette at member development sessions.

4.2 Councillor Development Charter

The Group has responsibility for overseeing and monitoring the work in respect of the Councillor Development Charter. The Council was successfully reassessed for the Charter in April 2022. This is the fourth time that the Council has been successfully assessed against the Charter standard.

The Group has been monitoring some of the recommendations made in the last assessment, particularly around the development of a Personal Development Plan process for members, and proposals for such a process were agreed by Cabinet in June 2024. Work to roll out the PDP process is ongoing and has been monitored by the Group.

Looking forward, the Council will be subject to a reassessment in spring of 2025 and overseeing and monitoring the preparations for this will be the focus of the Group's work programme for 2024-25.

4.3 Member Development Budget and Resources

The member development budget for the current municipal year was set at £8000. The expenditure on the member development budget for this municipal year is £6031, leaving an unspent balance £1969. The budget was used to fund the following:-

Member Charter Status Renewal fee, LGA	£3750
Charing Skills Training, LGIU	£821
Licensing Training, Braintree District Council	£135
Councillor Attendance at LGA Leadership sessions	£450
Carbon Literacy training, Rio	£875

The emphasis on training is to use in house resources where possible, and only commission external specialist training when absolutely necessary and this has contributed to the underspend on the budget. In addition, the Council did not nominate a member to attend Leadership Academy this municipal year, which would normally cost in the region of £1000.

Member development is supported by the Democratic Services Team. Considerable time and effort is put into providing sessions and development by officers right across the organisation. The Group wishes to formally record its appreciation for the

time and effort that officers and partners put into providing development opportunities for Councillors.

5. Conclusion

The Group's view is that a wide ranging and interesting programme of member development has been provided over the course of the 2023-24 municipal year. The programme of Chief Executive briefings and budget workshops have been particularly welcome and useful in keeping members informed and updated in a period of considerable challenge.

PETITIONS, PUBLIC STATEMENTS, QUESTIONS

(i) Have Your Say submissions from members of the public

Date of Meeting	Details of Members of the Public	Subject Matter	Form of Response	Date Completed
Environment and Sustainability Panel, 12 March 2024	Carinna Cooper	Electric Vehicles and the Council’s ‘green’ agenda.	Verbal response given at the meeting by the Head of Sustainability. The Chair of the Panel to respond directly.	12 March 2024
Cabinet, 13 March 2024	Melina Spantidaki	Proposal for use of Holy Trinity Church	Verbal response given at the meeting by Councillor Sommers, Portfolio Holder for Communities	13 March 2024
Cabinet, 13 March 2024	Richard Martin, Alan Short	The brief for the independent ecologist appointed for Middlewick	Verbal response given at the meeting by Councillor Luxford Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability	13 March 2024
Cabinet, 13 March 2024	Sir Bob Russell, Frances Wagstaff	The impact of the collapse of Middle Mill Weir	Verbal response given at the meeting by Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste	13 March 2024
Cabinet, 13 March 2024	Tony Cheeld	Colchester City “brand”	Verbal response given at the meeting by Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy	13 March 2024

Cabinet, 13 March 2024	Alderman Gerard Oxford	Section 106 funding for Highwoods	Verbal response given at the meeting by Councillor Luxford Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability	13 March 2024
Cabinet, 13 March 2024	Carinna Cooper	The Council's handling of applications for 5G masts	Written response sent by Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy on 3 April 2024	3 April 2024
Cabinet, 13 March 2024	Bevan Waghorn	The Leader of the Council's involvement with Community 360.	Verbal response given at the meeting by Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy	13 March 2024
Cabinet, 1 March 2024	Gordon Kerr	Local and national government finances and the banking system.	Verbal response given at the meeting by Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy	13 March 2024
Licensing Committee, 20 March 2024	Shaun Moore	Taxi bylaws and unitary authorities.	Verbal Response given at the meeting by the Licensing, Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager.	20 March 2024
Licensing Committee, 20 March 2024	Masibulele Madikazi	Councillors requested to act honourably.	No response was required.	20 March 2024
Licensing Committee, 20 March 2024	Wayne Thompson	Potholes and licensed vehicles in bus lanes.	Verbal Response given at the meeting by the Licensing, Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager.	20 March 2024
Licensing Committee, 20 March 2024	Peyman Oyar Hossein	Uber and drivers licensed by Wolverhampton.	Verbal Response given at the meeting by the Licensing, Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager.	20 March 2024

Licensing Committee, 20 March 2024	Justin Plane	Licensed Driver Knowledge Test	Verbal Response given at the meeting by the Licensing, Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager.	20 March 2024
Governance and Audit Committee, 9 April 2024	Melina Spantidaki	Proposal for use of Holy Trinity Church	Verbal response given at the meeting by the Chief Operating Officer.	9 April 2024
Council, 22 May 2024	Sir Bob Russell	The legitimacy of the new administration, changes to Have Your Say arrangements	Verbal response provided at the meeting Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy.	22 May 2024
Council, 22 May 2024	Alderman G. Oxford	Congratulations to new Mayor and thanks to retiring Mayor and Councillors	No response necessary	22 May 2024
Council, 22 May 2024	Alderman Higgins	Access to Lower Castle Park	Verbal response provided at the meeting Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy and a written response to follow.	
Council, 22 May 2024	Cheryl Taylor	Changes to Have Your Say arrangements	Verbal response provided at the meeting Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy.	22 May 2023
Council, 22 May 2024	David Charalambos	The need for Councillors to apply due diligence to the information they received to base decisions on.	Verbal response provided at the meeting Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy.	22 May 2024
Council, 22 May 2024	Brian Rees	The impact of basing decisions on incorrect information; the need for a public meeting to hear from	Verbal response provided at the meeting Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy.	22 May 2024

		UN accredited climatologists		
Council, 22 May 2024	Lance Peatling	The evidential basis o-to the changes to Have Your Say! arrangements	Verbal response provided at the meeting Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy.	22 May 2024

(ii) Petitions

Date petition received	Lead Petitioner	Subject Matter	Form of Response	Date Completed
No petition received in this period				