

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

## Background

The Peer Review conducted in late 2022 was undertaken against 5 core themes that form the core components of all corporate peer challenges. Colchester City Council asked the review team to also include two additional themes. The Core Themes are:

1. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?
2. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities?
3. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
4. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

The additional themes requested by the Council are:

6. **Transformation and Organisational Development** – CBC needs to reset and realign its organisation to reflect resource pressures and significant changes in working arrangements to support residents effectively, as Colchester's communities grow.
7. **Regeneration and Growth** - Colchester, now a city, plays into some important strategic arrangements and has a strong place-based focus when exploring the opportunities ahead for devolution through the Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds.

This Action Plan has grouped actions within these identified themes. Where these actions could be considered under multiple themes, the key theme has been selected. As significant activity has been undertaken since the original Action Plan was written, several actions have been completed and closed. For ease, this document is split into two sections with the Open Actions in Section 1 and Closed Actions in Section 2. All actions, whether open or closed are shown within their themes as referred to above.

The feedback from the Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review dated 27 July 2023 has been incorporated within the column headed "What We Have Done." They have been included in what has been considered the most appropriate place albeit that in several cases, they could be included in multiple places. All the updates from the Progress Review have been prefixed "**From LGA Progress Review – July 2023.**"

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

**Section 1**

**Open Actions**

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

1. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?

## Capital Programme

*Get a firmer grip on the capital programme – manage all risks and improve your planning to ensure you have appropriate strategic finance, programme and project capacity and the resources to deliver*

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it?	Portfolio Holder / Lead Officer
<b>Review of Capital Programme</b>	Review of Capital programme including agreed approach and formation of dedicated project group, workshops to investigate issues and quick wins. Review included analysis of each project and ongoing review of Colchester Northern Gateway programme. Initial findings agreed with Leadership in April 23 included set up of a new Programme Management to improve governance, monitoring and performance. Recommendations also included, and agreed included a new prioritisation tool, additional resources in key areas, the pause of some projects to re-evaluate affordability given changed economy, new Buildings Maintenance data tool development, new KPI linked to forecasting and removal of dormant projects. A separate review of Assets was	Ongoing review of CNG programme through CNG Board set up  Reset of the programme in Feb 2024.  Review of Capital Strategy to take place 2024/25 following reset and further embedding of review work.	Ongoing  Feb 24  2024-25	Cllr Mark Cory / Lucie Breadman / Andrew Small

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p>commissioned to take initial findings forward and a review of Colchester Northern Gateway Programme also commenced and is still ongoing. From a financial perspective the review has included a deep dive into assumed borrowing requirements, the pause in some projects is supporting the in-year financial position. A tightening of the decision process for new projects will manage the future borrowing costs more effectively and a mid-year reset enabled inclusion of any urgent new projects only. New reporting format has been well received by Governance and Audit and an open and transparent workshop with PFH and shadow PFHs along with key wider member group was held on 28<sup>th</sup> Sept to run through review activities to date, recommendations, remaining programme, finances and next steps. Going forward work will continue with CNG review, feeding into the revised capital programme, along with outcomes from the new Asset Strategy and Corporate Landlord model. The annual cycle of programme reset will recommence in Feb2024 and the new discipline of reviewing Revenue and Capital budgets side by side will continue at both Senior Board and</p>			
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## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p>Leadership. A revised Capital Strategy will be developed during 2024/25.</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - This is an area that you can clearly see is a priority for CCC and they have grasped the challenges ahead. Like many councils the current financial situation is a significant concern, but CCC are doing all they can to manage the situation including undertaking a comprehensive review of the Capital Programme with the report and recommendations informally agreed by Senior Leadership Board. The Council has put additional resources in place, with a new Programme Management Office. The Council has introduced a more robust gateway process, review of all projects, removal of old and dormant projects and amended prioritisation tool. The peer team recognises the challenges the Councils faces with its capital programme and stresses the importance of the new Section 151 Officer delivering his financial review within the agreed timescales.</p>			
<p><b>New strategic asset strategy:</b> Commission and develop a new asset strategy and Delivery Plan to cover occupational corporate</p>	<p>Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) were commissioned to develop an overarching Asset Management Strategy and Investment Plan for the organisation.</p>	<p>A report to Cabinet will outline the rationale for a Corporate Landlord Team model and ask Members to consider agreement to move Colchester Borough Homes Assets related staff, functions, and budgets</p>	<p>November 2023</p>	<p>Cllr. Mark Cory / Mandy Jones</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

<p>assets, future investment strategy and regeneration and surplus land</p>	<p>CIPFA have made recommendations and issued a draft report and strategy, aligning the work with the capital programme review.</p> <p>The draft strategy suggests the implementation of a Corporate Landlord Team (CLT) approach, which will involve Transformation in the delivery of assets work across the Council family. There will be several streams of work in setting up the CLT (structure of organisation, governance, data management and process / business improvement changes).</p> <p>A project team (including Amphora and CBH CEOs and with Project Management from the PMO has been set up to take the project forward.</p> <p>The establishment of the CLT model is a fundamental part of the future Asset strategy and decision making will be part of the Council's Transformation programme (including the CCHL review) and planned alongside to ensure interdependencies are accounted for and resource is allocated according to priorities.</p>	<p>into the Council as a first step. This aligns with a report from the Managing Director of Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited (CCHL) on the future strategy for CCHL, which includes repatriation of the Estates into the Council from CCHL as part of the corporate landlord model.</p> <p>First stage planning for Corporate Landlord has commenced with the appointment of an interim corporate landlord lead from November 20<sup>th</sup> 2023 to lead the wider transformation and transition of teams from Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited and Colchester Borough Homes.</p> <p>A Transition Group has been set up to manage and oversee the process of moving staff, functions, and budgets from Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited and Colchester Borough Homes.</p> <p>As part of the Transformation programme an outline plan for the corporate landlord team model will be developed</p>	<p>November 2023</p> <p>December 2023</p>	
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## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	CLT model commenced October 2023 but take 10-18 months to implement.			
<b>Energy consumption and use of assets:</b> Reduction in consumption of energy, possibility of use of renewables, retrofit opportunities.	An Energy Manager has been appointed and 6 properties have decarbonisation analysis plans prepared. We have started to scope further opportunities for carbon reduction in our estate and a first intervention has already been implemented to reduce electricity consumption from motors inside Leisure World. Smarter metering is also being planned, alongside better monitoring and management systems to inform behaviour changes. LED bulb replacements are now costed and will be one of several business cases prepared for some capital and revenue projects to be considered in budgeted setting processes that may also include solar PV additions to planned roof maintenance works. We are also developing a business case for a new water filtration system at Leisure World, which will save a significant volume of water and energy used to heat pool top-up. Plans have also been developed to upgrade the Building Energy Management System at the Town Hall.	Prepare a business case for LED replacement programmed for the Town Hall.	Complete	Cllr. Mark Cory / Mandy Jones / Mel Rundle /
		Prepare a business case for LED replacement programme for Leisure World	Complete	
		Prepare a business case for variable speed drives for Leisure World	Complete	
		Review the RIBA stage 3 design work for heating solutions at the Natural History Museum in time to prepare a bid to the PSDS grants scheme.	Complete	
		Help support the Sport England grant bid for energy efficiency measures at Leisure World.	Complete	
		Prepare business case for targeted sub-metering at Leisure World	End of December 2023	
		Collate the potential costs for all of the identified opportunities and feed into the PMO for capital programmed bid if unsuccessful with grant applications.	End of December 2023	
	Complete			

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

		Commission a desktop proposal for solar PV installation at Leisure World in time for the Sport England grant application		
<b>Asset / Estates partnerships involvement:</b> Review partnership involvement and identify future cross boundary opportunities (to align with cross council mapping of partnerships)	This will take place as part of the strategy development. In addition, a North Essex Energy Working Group has been set up to investigate opportunities in relation to the use of assets to support joint decarbonisation between Northeast Essex local authorities and the Health and Well Being Alliance, including funding opportunities and the use of solar PV.	<p>This work is ongoing and will be progressed further with the implementation of the corporate landlord function (as above).</p> <p>In addition, a North Essex Local Authorities working group has been set up to take forward cross boundary climate change and sustainability opportunities and the Energy group will be part of that work in future. A workshop is being planned for the new year to set priorities for the group.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>End February 2024</p>	Cllr. Mark Cory / Mandy Jones



# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

2. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities?

## City Status

*Focus on city status. Use this as an opportunity to galvanise partners, improve the Borough's economic and cultural strength and raise the voice of Colchester*

*Harness the excitement and benefits - that city status offers and seize the opportunity with both hands, using it as the platform to raise Colchester's voice*

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it?	Portfolio Holder / Lead Officer
Legacy and longer-term place making – A year of meeting and listening to our partners/ local businesses/Town and Parish Councils/ Uni/schools/residents to find out what City Status means to them and what they need from it	<p>Fabulous Year of Celebration with huge range of events and activities taking place across the whole City. Real buy in and use of Year of Celebration Marketing Branding giving a united feel backed up by great collaborations.</p> <p>'Board of Chairs' City Status Task &amp; Finish Group (external leads of partnerships and Leader of Council). Came together to agree approach and link up with existing focus on 'Colchester City Centre the next 100 years'.</p> <p>£50m of investment and extensive engagement including face to face, online, workshops with young people overseen by our creative sector</p>	<p>Ongoing analysis of Masterplanning Consultation and next steps</p> <p>Continued work with university and Institute.</p> <p>Evolvement of Place Marketing Group led by BID</p> <p>Place Based Plan development with Health Alliance</p> <p>Scrutiny Update on 1<sup>st</sup> year of being a new City</p>	<p>Oct 23 onwards</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Oct 23 onwards</p> <p>2024</p> <p>March 2024</p>	<p>Cllr. David King / Lucie Breadman</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p>partners. Participation in Key Cities Group for networking, knowledge, best practice and lobbying opportunities. Place based joined up marketing group, led by Business Improvement District to consider future vision and message has been successful, wide range of businesses participating, including big players like Zoo and Tiptree Jam (for the first time). Engagement with more rural areas (Town and Parish Councils) ongoing, debate at both scrutiny and policy panels with wider Cllrs and public. Tangible infrastructure change already underway in City Centre and engagement happening at all levels along with development of Place based plan and vision in consultation with key partners and Health Alliance.</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - CCC has fully embraced the opportunities that City status brings Colchester and has established a 'Board of Chairs' City Status Task and Finish Group created with external leads of key partnerships and the Leader of Council.</p> <p>The approach is ambitious and together with wider partnership groups is looking at 'Colchester City Centre over the next 100 years' and through extensive engagement the Council has</p>			
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## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	delivered a Year of Celebration and is now looking at consultation on its City Centre Master Plan and vision and through maximising the opportunities that attendance on the Key Cities Group brings			
City Vision: Co-design a compelling and longer-term place-based narrative/city vision to define Colchester for the future	<p>Linked to City Status Legacy work and update above. Collaborative Marketing Group established to consider narrative and vision and have run workshops to discuss and debate options, looked at from different perspectives (business, tourism, community). Capacity and resources to develop this work being recruited – senior Marketing role. Co-designed narrative and toolkit will be developed and agreed through Team Colchester.</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - it was clear that significant progress has been made across these two areas (City Vision and Leaders of Place). The new structure in place identifies a lead for key partnerships to reduce duplication including additional strategic capacity to support place-based health system work.</p> <p>The New broader partnership involvement in groups such as the key cities group, shared services, Team Colchester and City Regeneration Partnership demonstrate this.</p>	<p>Revise and adopt the City Centre Masterplan</p> <p>Develop a new city centre wide programmes plan to avoid clashes between schemes of work and maximise efficiencies</p> <p>Develop a new City Centre communications strategy with Team Colchester partners</p> <p>Work with Team Colchester and external advisors to explore the opportunities for a joint regeneration vehicle</p>	<p>Jan 24</p> <p>Dec 23</p> <p>Jan 24</p> <p>May 24</p>	<p>Cllr. David King / Lindsay Barker</p>

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

3. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?

## Leaders of Place Roles

**Strengthen your political and officer ‘leaders of place’ roles and look beyond Colchester – map your anchor institutions, partners and stakeholders and effectiveness**

Recommendation	What we have done <i>(Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)</i>	What we will do	When will we do it?	Portfolio Holder / Lead Officer
<p><b>Exemplar:</b> Use Alliance as exemplar/tool to guide approach to further develop key stakeholder relationships.</p>	<p>Review and reset of the Alliance commenced with support and facilitation through the Local Government Association. Purpose to develop stakeholder relationships further and go “beyond partnership” to joint structures, shared resource, pooled budgets. Colchester City Council participation in national Kings Fund research into District roles with Integrated Care Systems in recognition of exemplar approach</p>	<p>Development of an integrated place-based health and care plan for Colchester. The Plan will focus on socio-economic influences and geographic challenges including those associated with deprivation, poor-health behaviours and access and quality of services.  The plan will support our various Alliance partners strategic direction e.g. Tendring District Council/Colchester City Council strategies, joint forward plan within the ICB, SNEE integrated care partnership strategy and Joint Health and Wellbeing Plan for Essex as well as other system strategies that impact on our Alliance.</p>	<p>April 2024</p>	<p>Cllr. David King / Rory Doyle</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	Following agreement of new terms of reference for the Alliance Committee the wider system governance and resources feeding in is now under review.	Engagement happening with Stakeholders across the system – Member Briefings etc.  Work on developing Integrated Place based plans continuing – propose to have plan in place for Colchester by end of March 24		
<b>ABCD / Communities Can:</b> Support this developing work within CCC. Also capitalise on willingness of partners to step up and lean in on ABCD.	External funding secured for staff & member training as well as a Communities Can full time post to be hosted by Community 360 (recruitment underway). Training was paused last year due to the structural changes and the build up to Elections but is being progressed again in Summer 2023  SLT Update delivered to officers on the current progress and actions around ABCD / Communities Can (September 2023)  Initial Ripple Effect Mapping Workshop has taken place in November 2023 to map the actions and impacts directly linked to ABCD. Map Production & Review to take place in Feb 2024	Build on SLT Update in September to ascertain some actions going forward for ABCD / Communities Can Training.  Resume training programme and development of offer with our staff and services.  Engage with partners and specific Communities Can resource to further embed this approach / way of working into the wider system.  Undertake a Ripple Effect Mapping review of the work so far and continue to analyse and demonstrate the impact this is having for CCC and wider partners.  Prepare Policy Panel report on ABCD / Communities Can for January 2024	Nov / Dec 2023  January 2024  October 2023 Onwards  October 2023 / February 2024 Onwards  January / February 2024	Cllr. Natalie Summers / Michelle Tarbun / Tom Tayler

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

		Delivery. Recommendations to be examined / actioned in due course.		
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## Devolution and Government Reform

**Devolution and Local Government Reform - the devolution agenda is very much alive in Essex. It requires attention by the Council**

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it?	Portfolio Holder / Lead Officer
<p><b>Active participation:</b> Assess CCC's position to advocate for a deal that works for Colchester</p>	<p>Post election the current Chief Executive and Leader represent continuity in the discussions with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Essex partners. We have been involved from the beginning and have consistently made the case for second tier engagement at all levels and a broadening of the devolution agenda to include health and housing. Our elected members are fully appraised of progress as a result of regular engagement and briefings</p>	<p>Continue to engage actively in Greater Essex negotiations with DLUHC following the offer of a level 2 deal. Working towards a potential announcement in the Autumn Statement on November 22 2023. Keeping MPs and Members always engaged.</p> <p>Nov 23 - There was no formal update in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement re Greater Essex devolution. However, we expect to receive a formal announcement before Christmas following Lord Young's letter to all Greater Essex MPs</p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>Cllr. David King / Pam Donnelly / Matt Sterling</p>
<p><b>Resources:</b> CCC to fully consider the resources required to ensure that it can</p>	<p>Currently the leadership of this responsibility lies with the Chief Executive and Leader. However, we are fully supported by the current</p>	<p>Opportunities not fully clear at this stage and will come from the current negotiations. Some resource already in place working through the details.</p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>Cllr. David King / Pam Donnelly</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

<p>continue to deliver its priorities whilst maximising the opportunities that devolution/LGR could bring for Colchester</p>	<p>economic strategy team and the Executive Director for Place in ensuring our strategies respond to the opportunities for devolution. Relationships (e.g. Team Colchester) are well established to accept any future devolved powers re skills and transport.</p> <p>It is difficult to see what the devolution deal for Essex means for City, Borough and District Authorities which is why we stay fully engaged and ensure our resources are in a place which allows us to maximise to the opportunities associated with devolution.</p>	<p>We remain active in determining governance arrangements through the lead authority (Braintree)</p>		
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# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

4. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?

## Strengthen engagement with ECC

CCC further strengthen political and officer leadership engagement with Essex County Council. The peer team heard it is getting better, however there is still more opportunity for improvement

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it??	Portfolio Holder / Lead Officer
<p><b>Working framework:</b> CCC to lead development of this with ECC and town/parish councils, to provide clarity to the community on how all the tiers/constituent parts will work together</p>	<p>Facilitated Town and Parish Forum with a focus on key workstreams cutting across tiers of local government. Other examples include working with Essex County Council on waste Strategy development and City Master Planning.</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - The relationship with Essex County Council will require continuing leadership from both parties, as shown by joint work on regeneration. Work on Public Health was seen as positive, and the sharing of the City Council's Rowan House HQ will help. But working with Highways was less so.</p>	<p>Work alongside ECC Sustainable Growth and Levelling Up Leads in the development of an integrated place plan for Colchester focussed on delivering against shared priorities.</p>	<p>April 2024</p>	<p>Cllr. David King / Rory Doyle</p>



# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

## Review Priorities and Projects

Review your priorities and projects and refocus on delivering 'Brilliant Business as Usual' and strengthen your corporate resources

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it?	Portfolio Holder / Lead Officer
<p><b>Grow your own:</b> Consider more use of apprenticeship levy and other innovative options for existing staff across CCC. Use to advance careers or move to new field within CCC. Corporate apprentice and graduate programme - further develop this.</p>	<p>We have a well-established and regarded apprenticeship programme in place. We currently have 20 staff working utilising the levy to gain professional qualifications and advance their careers including town planning, project management, chartered management, Human Resources, accountancy and data analysis. We are signed up to the Local Government Association graduate programme and intending to recruit our first cohort this year. We have also created a career progression route for frontline staff in Neighbourhood Services. This has supported 5 Recycling and Waste Loaders to become HGV drivers for the Recycling &amp; Waste Service and drivers to become Route Coordinators.</p>	<p>Attendance at apprentice careers fairs at the Colchester Institute, sixth form college, Paxman Academy. Regular promotion of apprenticeship programmes to upskill and help staff to gain professional qualifications.</p> <p>Plans to sign up to National Graduate Scheme with Braintree and Epping Forest District Councils.</p> <p>Service workforce plans being developed which will focus on career development, growing our own, upskilling and succession planning.</p>	<p>Sept 2024</p> <p>January 2024</p>	<p>Cllr. Alison Jay / Jess Douglas</p>
<p><b>'Be 'Employer of choice':</b> Develop this</p>	<p>Recruitment "squad" has started work on defining our employee value</p>	<p>Recruitment Squad is currently working on:</p>	<p>May 2024</p>	<p>Cllr. Alison Jay / Jess Douglas</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

<p>approach. Refocus on employee value proposition, repackage CCC's offer and focus on what it can provide for future employees.</p>	<p>proposition and branding as part of a comprehensive review of recruitment. This is a priority in the Organisation Development Plan.  <b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - With the sector facing significant challenges around recruitment and retention, it is important that CCC continues to develop its Employer Value Proposition. It has an excellent working space, strong approach to valuing and supporting staff, good training and development opportunities and benefits package – CCC can become an employer of choice.</p>	<p>Researching best practice  Identifying our employer brand and embedding across recruitment cycle  Use of social media  Extending our reach to attract a diverse pool of candidates –positive action  Attending career fairs etc  Providing help and support to young and neuro-diverse candidates for applications.</p> <p>So far:  Jobs board on website under review and ready to launch.  Proposals for inclusive website in development in partnership with website and communications team.</p>		
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### Review Waste Service

**Review your priorities and projects and refocus on delivering ‘Brilliant Business as Usual’ and strengthen your corporate resources**

Recommendation	What we have done <i>(Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)</i>	What we will do	When will we do it?	Portfolio Holder / Lead Officer
<p><b>Mode of delivery:</b>  Consider rationalising this across the borough</p>	<p>A consultant has been contracted to undertake a review and the development of a new Recycling &amp; Refuse Strategy. A workshop has been undertaken with the Environment &amp;</p>	<p>Work with the Environment &amp; Sustainability Panel to recommend to Cabinet a draft recycling and waste strategy for Colchester:</p>		<p>Cllr. Martin Goss / Rosa Tanfield</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p>Sustainability Panel but will need to be revisited following the elections. It is proposed to launch the new strategy in 2024, concurrent to a new Essex strategy.</p> <p>Three workshops have been undertaken with Members (to raise awareness of the need to develop a strategy, to receive feedback and insight into a vision and priorities benchmarking against other ‘high performing’ authorities and receive feedback on options for the service and how these options would be evaluated.)</p>	<p>Evaluate options against the agreed criteria to refine a short list of options. Undertake detailed technical and financial modelling of the short-listed options.</p> <p>Draft new strategy</p> <p>Present draft strategy to Environment &amp; Sustainability Panel</p> <p>Recommendations to Cabinet</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>Present final strategy and deliver against plans</p>	<p>February 2024</p> <p>March 2024</p> <p>April/June 2024</p> <p>June/August 2024</p> <p>September/October 2024</p>	
<p><b>Recover costs:</b> Explore every opportunity to recover reasonable costs of waste service delivery.</p>	<p>The ‘free’ bulky collection service has now stopped, with only a chargeable bulky collection available. The Saturday Household Drop Off Service has changed to target only areas of low disposable income. Both schemes have reduced revenue budget pressure by £51k. Introduced new services for third parties (Parish Councils, housing associations, etc) to pay for residual or garden waste drop off services.</p>	<p>Launch the new chargeable garden waste collection service.</p> <p>Review fees and charges and put forward recommendations.</p>	<p>January 2024</p> <p>January 2024</p>	<p>Cllr. Martin Goss / Rosa Tanfield</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p>Introduced new a product offer for business waste customers through refurbishing bins. Increased food waste collection costs for business waste customers to reflect true costs of disposal. Full Council have agreed to the introduction of a chargeable garden waste scheme. Work is underway and plans are in place for it to be implemented in January 2024.</p> <p>Garden waste charging scheme has been agreed and has now launched, meaning that all residents have the opportunity to sign up to the scheme and have their garden waste collected from a wheeled bin. Reusable bags will no longer be an option, but can be retained and reused by the resident, or taken to the Household Recycling Centres for recycling. Residents also have other options to manage their garden waste, such as composting.</p>	<p>Launch the online subscription</p> <p>Last universal garden waste collection</p> <p>First garden waste subscription collection</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>22 December 2023</p> <p>15 January 2024</p>	
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# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

6. **Transformation and Organisational Development** – CBC needs to reset and realign its organisation to reflect resource pressures and significant changes in working arrangements to support residents effectively, as Colchester’s communities grow.

## Hybrid Working and New Values

**Better define with your staff what ‘hybrid working’ means for CCC and provide a clear definition. Also, clarify how the new CCC values will be designed and embedded, communicating to staff how these define the Council and will help achieve Colchester’s ambition**

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it?	Portfolio Holder / Lead Officer
<b>Increased finance capacity:</b> Through an additional capital accountant	Additional capital accountant recruited and in place	We are working closely with Epping Forest DC in a shared services arrangements to align Finance Teams and thereby increase resilience, capacity and knowledge around technical areas.	Ongoing from April 2023.	Cllr. Alison Jay / Andrew Small
<b>SUN group:</b> To engage across CCC to develop the values/lead drive to enact them in everything the Council does.	Vision, Purpose and Values agreed. Speak Up Now employee engagement group engaged to identify ways to promote the values. Recruitment review underway to ensure inclusion. Values incorporated into new Appraisal App.	Recruitment squad meetings underway to incorporate VPV into the process.  Appraisal App due for launch.	Ongoing  Anticipated launch date December with Managers Network event/ Learning Pool elearning in January  Q3/Q4	Cllr. Alison Jay / Amanda Mann

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - The Council has developed and is due to launch a new vision, purpose and values and has taken a bottom-up approach to this, empowering staff to take this leadership role and work with managers to collaboratively develop these new approaches.</p>	<p>Potential all staff webinar to cover wellbeing and VPV</p> <p>Pam and Lindsay attending team meetings to promote VPV.</p> <p>Internal comms plan in place.</p> <p>VPV embedded into new Welcome to CCC face to face and eLearning induction.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>January 2024</p>	
<p><b>New management development programme:</b> All teams to have clear understanding of values and are united behind them.</p>	<p>Organisational Development Plan action plan in place to embed new vision purpose and values alongside an internal communications plan. Values will be embedded in recruitment Employees Value Proposition, induction, appraisal and talent management and management development programmes.</p>	<p>Vision, Purpose, values launched with internal communications plan. Embedded in new induction workshop. Pam and Lindsay have attended team meetings to launch. All staff webinar planned for Nov 2023 Value graphics to be installed in RH and rolled out across other offices. Staff pulse survey planned. Values to be embedded in recruitment, appraisal App, L&amp;D plans.</p>	<p>May 2024</p>	<p>Cllr. Alison Jay / Jess Douglas</p>
<p><b>People Strategy:</b> Should complement the new Strategic Plan as enabler for improving workforce capability and engagement.</p>	<p>People Strategy and new Organisational Development Plan prioritises improving workforce capability and engagement. Business Partners are about to start work on service workforce plans with Head of Service following the new senior leadership team review.</p>	<p>HR Business Partners have attended LGA Workforce Planning training in September 2023.</p> <p>BPs will work with Heads of Service and managers to develop workforce plans to facilitate the delivery of service plans and priorities, including skills</p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>Cllr. Alison Jay / Jess Douglas</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - Ensuring all services areas are fully engaged, particularly those that work from alternative locations, such as Leisure Services and Waste and Recycling, will be a challenge, but the Peer Team recognise the positive work undertaken to date and encourage CCC to continue to improve staff engagement and embed the new structure to build on the opportunities provided by Rowan House and new ways of working</p>	<p>analysis, career pathways and development, talent management and use of apprentices.</p>		
<p><b>Talent Management:</b> Shout about it; increase amount of staff information and guidance.</p>	<p>Talent management programme to be re-launched alongside the launch of the new appraisal App which bring performance and talent management together. Talent management will also be a theme in the service workforce plans.</p>	<p>New appraisal and talent management app to be launched November 2023.</p> <p>Talent management and succession plans to be included in service workforce plans currently in development.</p>	<p>Dec 2023</p> <p>Dec 2023</p>	<p>Cllr. Alison Jay / Jess Douglas</p>
<p><b>Equality and diversity:</b> Be more proactive. Harness Colchester's diversity better.</p>	<p>Work progressing on developing an equalities framework and policy for community engagement and workforce, informed by the Local Government Association equalities framework.</p>	<p>New EDI policy in draft – consultation with EDI Group, champions and SUN Group has started.</p> <p>EDI L&amp;D plan is being developed and has budget committed.</p> <p>Framework development started in conjunction with colleagues in Health and Wellbeing Service.</p> <p>Governance in place – quarterly reports to SLB have started.</p>	<p>December 2024</p>	<p>Cllr. Alison Jay / Mandy Jones / Jess Douglas</p>
<p><b>Recruitment and retention:</b> Use devolution/LGR as a</p>	<p>Currently working with North Essex partners and Braintree and Epping separately on recruitment and retention</p>	<p>Work is progressing within North Essex Head of HR group.</p>	<p>Autumn 2024 in line with</p>	<p>Cllr. Alison Jay / Jess Douglas</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

<p>route to look more strategically at these challenges</p>	<p>challenges. Colchester City Council is involved in the project looking at Planners which is being supported by the Local Government Association. Currently have an agreed arrangement in place with Epping and Braintree as part of the shared services work to share vacancies and looking for joint working opportunities.</p>	<p>3 x NE council's are proposing to sign up to Essex CC temporary and agency framework. Essex CC recruitment team are developing a bespoke service for planning and proposing to extend this to other hard to recruit areas e.g finance and EHOs. NE Heads of HR have recommended that Essex CC recruitment team present to Chief Executives group at their next meeting. Currently have an agreed arrangement in place with Epping and Braintree as part of the shared services work to share vacancies and looking for joint working opportunities.</p>	<p>shared service programme</p>	
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# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

7. **Regeneration and Growth** - Colchester, now a city, plays into some important strategic arrangements and has a strong place-based focus when exploring the opportunities ahead for devolution through the Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds.

## Review of CCHL and CBH

**Commission an independent review of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd, and its subsidiaries, also undertake an internal review of Colchester Borough Homes to assess whether the companies are realising the benefits they were established to deliver**

Recommendation	What we have done <i>(Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)</i>	What we will do	When will we do it?	Portfolio Holder / Lead Officer
<b>CCHL review:</b> Get independent external assurance that CCHL is meeting CCC's expectations; delivering real benefits; providing value for money. Also, that risks are understood, and governance arrangements are robust	<p>A risk assessment was commissioned in November 2022 by Ethical Consulting which reported in December 2022 identifying clear risks and issues that needed addressing.</p> <p>A full review of Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited and its subsidiary companies was commissioned in January 2023 aligned to the departure of the Managing Director of Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited and will clarify strategic objectives in Summer with Colchester City Council and conclude in Autumn 23.</p> <p>An interim Managing Director was recruited in January 2023 (started March 2023) to lead the review of Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited and the development of the Board.</p>	<p>Following the review, a detailed report outlining the Proposed Future Strategy of Amphora has been prepared by the Interim Managing Director of CCHL. The report is being submitted to CCC Governance and Audit Committee on 17 October 2023 for consideration before it is commended to the Council's Cabinet.</p>	<p>Oct 2023 for Governance and Audit Committee</p> <p>Nov 2023 for Cabinet</p>	<p>Cllr David King / Lindsay Barker</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p>A Shareholder team of senior officers was established to develop the action plan in response to the outcomes of the risk assessment and review and a short term 'Oversight' group comprising Executive members, Chair of Governance and Audit, Chairs of Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited and Colchester Borough Homes Board and leader of the Opposition was set up to consider the emerging action plan and response to the reviews.</p> <p>Immediate changes to the constitution were made and Governance and risk support and training has started with the Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited team.</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - CCC has gripped this recommendation and undertaken a comprehensive risk assessment and full review of Colchester Commercial (Holdings) and subsidiary companies. A new Interim Managing Director has been appointed for CCHL and a new Shareholder officer Team established to develop an action plan in response to review recommendations.</p>			
<p><b>CCHL Annual Report:</b> For both the Risk Assessment and the CCHL Peer Review</p>	<p>The Risk Assessment and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy full review and response</p>	<p>Scheduled for review by Governance and Audit Committee</p>	<p>Nov 2023</p>	<p>Cllr David King / Lindsay Barker</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	have both been reported confidentially into Governance and Audit Committee.			
<p><b>Team Colchester:</b> Established in 2022 to lead regeneration in the City Centre. Chaired by Leader of City Council</p>	<p>Team Colchester is a cross party collaborative team comprising Leader of Colchester City Council and Essex County Council as well as lead Portfolio Holders for Regeneration and opposition members. It is now well established and has led the commissioning and development of the masterplan and transport strategy for the City Centre – extensive public consultation and engagement started 19 June 2023.</p> <p>Team Colchester was successful with its Levelling Up Fund Bid of £20m in Jan 2023 and is already underway with delivery of the schemes within the bid. Team Colchester is now exploring the wider regeneration opportunities underpinned by shared assets to deliver economic benefits, new public realm and new housing including the opportunities for a joint delivery vehicle to deliver.</p>	<p>Team Colchester continues to meet and is delivering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New programme management process for Levelling Up adopted</li> <li>• New city centre wide programmes plan to avoid clashes between schemes of work and maximise efficiencies</li> <li>• New City Centre communications strategy with Team Colchester partners</li> <li>• Exploration for the opportunities for a joint regeneration vehicle</li> </ul>	<p>Oct 2023</p> <p>Dec 2023</p> <p>Jan 2024</p> <p>May 2024</p>	<p>Cllr David King / Lindsay Barker</p>
<p><b>Joint levelling up fund submitted:</b> We are awaiting the outcomes of this</p>	<p>This bid was submitted on time and was successful. As above circa £20m was awarded and mobilisation work is underway to deliver this programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver programme funded by the bid including remodelling St Botolph's Junction, improving shopfronts, regenerating Britannia Yard.</li> <li>• Next steps:</li> <li>• ECC carry out next stage of design work for St Botolph's</li> </ul>	<p>Mar 2026</p>	<p>Cllr David King / Matt Sterling</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

		<p>junction following the public consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Masterplanning for Britannia by London and Continental Railways starts</li><li>• Viability Review of Vineyard scheme concludes</li></ul>		
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# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

## Section 2

### Closed Actions

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

1. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?

## Capital Programme

*Get a firmer grip on the capital programme – manage all risks and improve your planning to ensure you have appropriate strategic finance, programme and project capacity and the resources to deliver*

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it?	Lead Officer / Portfolio Holder
<b>Investment strategy:</b> Develop to inform our future programme	Broad principles for investment will emerge from work on the future Asset Strategy for future direction for asset investment and regeneration (see above and work on the city centre). Further work will involve alignment with the Capital strategy and programme.	This work will be progressed as part of the Capital programme reset and Asset strategy and corporate landlord function (as outlined above). This will ensure strategic priorities are balanced and the capital programme reflects budget challenges.	Closed November 2023	Mandy Jones
<b>Assets:</b> Consider usage of large asset base to support focused key sector growth.	This is being considered as part of the commission to Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy for an Asset Management Strategy outlined under the Capital Programme item above. The report on the strategy will be delivered end July 2023.	This will be part of the work emerging from the strategy and corporate landlord team function (as outlined above).	Closed November 2023	Mandy Jones

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

2. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities?

## City Status

*Focus on city status. Use this as an opportunity to galvanise partners, improve the Borough's economic and cultural strength and raise the voice of Colchester*

*Harness the excitement and benefits - that city status offers and seize the opportunity with both hands, using it as the platform to raise Colchester's voice*

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it?	Lead Officer / Portfolio Holder
Year of Celebration – Commencing 1 January 2023. Focusing on Heritage and cultural events already happening + Big Siege Event and establish a clear marketing strategy.	Year of Celebration – Business Improvement District early adopter with Marketing Campaign followed by City Council Toolkit and Year of Celebration events and collaborative marketing approach. City Council including investment into two major events in calendar. Overall, 37 events in programme spanning city centre and rural areas, <a href="#">Link to events calendar</a> Year of Celebration marketing image utilised widely by partners and now picked up in legacy work. In addition to these there has also been a Civic Ceremony, Royal Visit, Coronation Celebration linked, Creative Events Fund, Compassionate City Status, Celebration of Volunteering, and free heritage tours for residents.	<p>Programme of events in Year of Celebration have continued to increase throughout the year... BID feedback that footfall in City Centre has been better than ever with support of events and growing number of events described as phenomenal.</p> <p>Momentum feeding into confidence and programme of events for Christmas and next year.</p> <p>Planning a roundup of 'Year of Celebration' Media coverage in Jan'24 (not to clash with pre-Christmas marketing)</p>	Closed 27.9.23	Lucie Breadman

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

<p>Civic – Award of City Status on 23 November 2022 and possible Royal visit, governance arrangements, branding and comms.</p>	<p>Year of Celebration – BID early adopter with Marketing Campaign followed by City Council Toolkit and Year of Celebration events and collaborative marketing approach. City Council including investment into two major events in calendar. Overall, 37 events in programme spanning city centre and rural areas, <a href="#">Link to events calendar</a> Year of Celebration marketing image utilised widely by partners and now picked up in legacy work. In addition to Year of Celebration events, Civic Ceremony, Royal Visit, Coronation Celebration linked, Creative Events Fund, Compassionate City Status, Celebration of Volunteering, and free heritage tours for Colchester residents.</p>	<p>Completed.</p>	<p>Closed 27.9.23</p>	<p>Lucie Breadman</p>
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# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

3. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?

## Leaders of Place Roles

**Strengthen your political and officer ‘leaders of place’ roles and look beyond Colchester – map your anchor institutions, partners and stakeholders and effectiveness**

Recommendation	What we have done <i>(Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)</i>	What we will do	When will we do it?	Lead Officer / Portfolio Holder
<p><b>Focus:</b> On resources and engagement on the relationships that will have most impact on residents and enable delivery of Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>Partnership strategy reviewed including evaluation updated approach to annual cycle. In addition, reflection and evaluation of existing partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual review of partnerships and external bodies completed, and some removed from 2022 list.</li> <li>• New leadership structure focus on lead for key partnerships and reduction in duplication of Council officer attendance.</li> <li>• Key existing partnership reviews – Health Alliance – comprehensive review including workshops and agreed future approach to focus.</li> <li>• New broader partnership involvement – key cities, shared services, Team Colchester</li> </ul> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - it was clear that significant</p>	<p>Comments have been noted and CCC have undertaken to work closely with all partners across all facets of the organisation.</p>	<p>Closed November 2023</p>	<p>Cllr. David King / Richard Block</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p>progress has been made across these two areas (City Vision and Leaders of Place). The New broader partnership involvement in groups such as the key cities group, shared services, Team Colchester and City Regeneration Partnership demonstrate this.</p> <p>The Council was a lead partner in the review and reset of the North Essex Health Alliance which has been recognised by the Kings Fund and District Councils Network on the role of district councils in driving better health outcomes through Integrated Care Systems.</p> <p>Overall CCC should look to strengthen engagement with partners at an operational level as well as ensuring it is as bold and ambitious as it can be with its plans for the City.</p>			
<p>Strategic discussions at Senior Leadership Board</p>	<p>Regular strategic horizon scanning including key relationships now conducted at Senior Leadership Board</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - The Chief Executive has also restructured her Senior Leadership Team with new Heads of Service appointed. In addition, there is a new interim Managing Director of Colchester Commercial Holdings and a new board chair of Colchester Borough Homes. Although early days, this feels like a strong leadership team that has a</p>	<p>Now added Horizon Scanning to agenda so is Business as Usual</p>	<p>Closed 29/09/2023</p>	<p>Pam Donnelly</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	shared vision and drive for improvement			
<p><b>Councillors:</b> Ensure aware of, engaged in and supportive of CCC's future plans, particularly the opportunities that city status bring.</p>	<p>Monthly Chief Executive Update briefings as well as subject specific briefings e.g. finance, North Essex Garden Communities, Capital Programme review. Scrutiny Panel received peer challenge action plan and recommended changes. Further specific peer challenge update to Cabinet on 11/7 as well as an all Member briefing on 24/7</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - it was clear that CCC continues to build on its strong approach to cross party working and despite the changes in leadership, there was a continued focus on delivering the best for Colchester's communities – this is to be applauded.</p> <p>The Council should look to further harness the strong pride in Colchester demonstrated by all the councillors we met.</p>	<p>Promoted at every available opportunity by the Chief Executive.</p> <p>Continued Member Briefings on a range of issues including Devolution, Town Deal and Levelling Up City Centre changes.</p> <p>City Status exploration at Scrutiny and Policy Panel in the first quarter of 2023 and a follow up will take place in the first quarter of 2024 for Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>Policy Panel review of new Place Marketing Group in October 2023, endorsing collaborative approach.</p> <p>Cross party T&amp;F board set up in early days to steer activities which are now part of ongoing business for Team Colchester, BID, Creative Colchester, Uni Civic Agreement and One Colchester.</p> <p>Cross party workshop on Capital Programme held late September.</p> <p>Future Place Vision work to be progressed through joint working with Health Alliance.</p>	<p>Completed and Closed Oct 2023</p>	<p><del>Pam Donnelly</del> Lucie Breadman</p>

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

<p><b>Look beyond Colchester and Essex:</b> Time to look nationally and internationally.</p>	<p>The Leader was invited to attend an audience with King Charles at the request of the British Ambassador in Paris (rescheduled because of public disorder in Paris)</p> <p>The Mayor and other City figures represent us widely in Europe through a series of well established twinning events. The Chief Executive with other senior officers takes every opportunity to speak at local and national conferences and Local Government Association, District Council Networks. In addition, our work is showcased in academic publications most notably with the University of Essex and Anglia Ruskin University. This includes frequent reference through the Kings Fund to our leading work with health and wider system partners which is regarded to be excellent nationally. It remains an ambition to increase and broaden Colchester representation at national events.</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - the Leader of the Council was invited to attend an audience with King Charles at the request of the British Ambassador in Paris and the Mayor and other City figures have represented CCC widely in Europe through twinning events.</p>	<p>This is embedded in Business as Usual including at SOLACE October 2023</p>	<p>Closed 29/09/2023</p>	<p>Pam Donnelly</p>
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## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

<p><b>Effectiveness of Partnerships:</b> Review of Partnership Strategy and evaluation of partnerships approach</p>	<p>Partnership strategy reviewed including evaluation updated approach to annual cycle. In addition, reflection and evaluation of existing partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual review of partnerships and external bodies completed, and some removed from 2022 list.</li> <li>• New leadership structure focus on lead for key partnerships and reduction in duplication of Council officer attendance.</li> <li>• Key existing partnership reviews – Health Alliance – comprehensive review including workshops and agreed future approach to focus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New broader partnership involvement – key cities, shared services</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - The Council should consult with members around the best systems to progress case work. This could include the development of partner directories for sign posting and or the development of a member case work portal for the Council. By developing a ‘partnership directory’ or ‘partnership portal’, detailing partners from a range of sectors, councillors would be able to directly signpost, avoiding duplication and ensuring communities get the best service possible. In addition, similar engagement with members should</p>	<p>Strategy has reviewed and updated but will continue to evolve over time.</p> <p>Our annual evaluation of partnership involvement through democratic services will continue and a light touch review of the Strategy will happen on an annual basis.</p> <p>An owner of the Strategy needs to be allocated and talks are underway with the PMO.</p> <p>Highlighted parts of the July 23 update over do not feel correctly linked to this area and think wording changed in the final report (or at least it should have). No plans to develop a partnership directory, this would be very labour intensive and require ongoing resources to maintain and update that the Council just doesn’t have currently.</p>	<p>Closed Sept 23</p>	<p>Lucie Breadman / Michelle Tarbun</p> <p>May change to the PMO</p>
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## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	continue on matters related to S106 contributions.			
<b>Resource:</b> Identify additional internal strategic resource to work alongside new Alliance Director.	Strategic Directors appointed as part of new Senior Leadership Board - Alliance & Inequalities identified as lead role within Rory Doyle's 'portfolio' in support of Alliance priorities. Colchester City Council and Essex City Council agreed to provide formal strategic capacity into the Alliance up to 2 days per week to work alongside Alliance Dir and support Alliance Review and health system work. Proposals in development to establish permanent joint strategic roles to lead Place based health system work joint funded between Colchester City Council and Integrated Care Board	Memorandum of understanding in place between ICB and CCC and formal joint post - Associate Director of Alliance Integrated Strategic Partnerships  Alignment of Head of Health Partnerships and Wellbeing role within the ICB Senior Team reporting to above.	Closed November 2023	Rory Doyle

### Devolution and Government Reform

**Devolution and Local Government Reform - the devolution agenda is very much alive in Essex. It requires attention by the Council**

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it?	Lead Officer / Portfolio Holder
<b>Active involvement:</b> In the development of the devolution pitch for	Chief Executive attends fortnightly meetings with selected Chief Executives from across South and North Essex to participate in the	Pitch has been completed and the deal has been offered.	Closed 29/09/23	Pam Donnelly

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

<p>Greater Essex by the Leader and Chief Exec</p>	<p>collaboration and co design of our devolution officer with colleagues from Southend, Thurrock and Essex. We participate in Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities workshops and are actively involved in supporting the Chief Executive at Braintree with the development of the Governance arrangements to support a future Combined Authority. In addition, we make a strong case for second tier authorities in ensuring a place perspective is reflected in the ultimate deal and the resources which will flow to communities.</p>			
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# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

## 4. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?

### Change Election Cycle

**Strongly consider whether changing your election cycle will help you achieve your goals, ambitions and deliver improved services for Colchester's communities**

Recommendation	What we have done <i>(Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)</i>	What we will do	When will we do it?	Lead Officer / Portfolio Holder
<p><b>Full Council Motion:</b> To explore the alternative electoral arrangements, whether as now or 'All Up', or a variation. The Council will set up a cross-party working group to explore all options with findings to be presented to Full Council in February. Council can then review findings collectively and discuss next steps forward.</p>	<p>Cross party working group created to consider issue. A key issue is the forthcoming electoral boundary review. The group recommended to that consideration of changing the Council's electoral cycle be deferred until the forthcoming electoral review of Colchester has been completed and implemented in 2026.</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - This area has been considered by Full Council on 22 February 2023. An all-party working group was created to consider the issue which identified a key consideration is the forthcoming electoral review of the city.</p> <p>Full Council therefore resolved that consideration of changing the Council's electoral cycle be deferred until the forthcoming electoral review of</p>	<p>This is now closed as a specific action and will be reviewed again once the forthcoming electoral review of Colchester by the Local Government Boundary Commission has been completed and implemented in 2026.</p>	<p>Closed 13/09/2023</p>	<p>Andrew Weavers</p>



## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	Colchester by the Local Government Boundary Commission has been completed and implemented in 2026			
<b>Political engagement:</b> Immediate, with all councillors, to avoid risk of investigating option for which there is no political appetite	Cross party working group created to consider issue and make a recommendation to Full Council.	This is now closed as the working group met and made its recommendation to Full Council on 22 February 2023 which was endorsed	Closed 13/09/23	Andrew Weavers

### Scrutiny

**Consider how scrutiny can add greater value and impact through effective programming**

Recommendation	What we have done (Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)	What we will do	When will we do it?	Lead Officer / Portfolio Holder
Effective Scrutiny of Partnerships	Picked up as part of the review of partnerships strategy and included in that as well as Member Development lead looking specifically at programme of development to consider relevant content and support.	This is a repeat of the one above	Closed 29.9.23	Lucie Breadman / Michelle T
Resource: With support, scrutiny can provide challenge, help shape CCC's future direction and be effective in changing lives in the community	Scrutiny Panel Work programme reviewed at start of municipal year to identify areas where the Panel can achieve this. Scrutiny Panel is supported through a Senior Leadership Team lead officer, Democratic Services Officer and other Senior Board input (for example - Chief Operating Officer).	Continue to work with the Chair and the panel on the future work programme to deliver this recommendation.	Monthly in line with meetings Programme.  Closed November 2023	Jess Douglas / Michelle Tarbun

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	Chief Executive also meets with the chair of the Scrutiny Panel on a monthly basis to identify opportunities to achieve this.			
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# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

## Review Priorities and Projects

Review your priorities and projects and refocus on delivering 'Brilliant Business as Usual' and strengthen your corporate resources

Recommendation	What we have done <i>(Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)</i>	What we will do	When will we do it?	Lead Officer / Portfolio Holder
<b>People Strategy:</b> Reflect on capacity within HR/OD to deliver this.	Organisational Development Project Co-ordinator appointed and started Monday 5 June.	OD Project Co-ordinator appointed and is programme managing the OD Plan and supporting the delivery of OD projects within the programme.	Closed 5.6.2023	Jess Douglas
<b>New Strategic Plan</b> to be developed with prioritised delivery plan and a "golden rope" linking all CCC's strategies and operations; critical to stretched resources. This should be developed following engagement with councillors, staff, and stakeholders. The strategic plan should be clearly linked to a robust resourcing plan for people and finance, plus	New Strategic Plan developed and adopted at Full Council in February 2023. This was developed following an extensive "Future of Colchester" consultation including a public survey, councillor survey, focus groups and Councillor Policy Panel engagement. Delivery plan developed and adopted by Cabinet in March 2023. Clear resource allocations made to support delivery.	Completed	Closed November 2023	Cllr. David King / Richard Block

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

CCC's wide portfolio of programmes and projects.				
<b>Define 'Brilliant Business as Usual'</b> through reviewing service provision and ensure this is appropriate for a modern green city and is deliverable with the resources available.	“Developing Modern Services for a Modern City” now a key priority within the new Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan. Service levels and models being redefined across several key services e.g. Neighbourhood Services, Customer Contact Centre, Sport and Leisure.	Completed	Closed November 2023	Cllr. David King / Richard Block
<b>Review all projects and prioritise against the following tests:</b> Delivery against new strategic plan and delivery plan objectives Support for refined “Brilliant Business as - Usual” services Available capacity to deliver	Updated Capital Project Prioritisation Tool and existing Project Prioritisation checklist embedded into Project Initiation Documents address this at a high level. Pre-Project and Feasibility Gateways which specifically challenge colleagues to think about outcomes, scope and funding including maintenance and human resources address this for new projects.	Completed	Closed November 2023	Cllr. David King / Richard Block
<b>Strengthen corporate resources:</b> Develop a business case - for strengthened Corporate Services and deliver by consolidation of services. Avoid continual chipping away at CS as impacts entire CCC. Services to	Business case developed and additional resources secured in finance, Project Management Officer, Human Resources and Communications through Strategic Plan Delivery Plan. Project Management Office set up with gateway process with oversight from Programme Delivery Group which includes Corporate Services. Shared	Completed	Closed November 2023	Cllr. David King / Richard Block

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

proactively involve CS at project initiation stage to save services' time solving foreseeable problems.	Services programme with Braintree District Council and Epping Forest District Council commenced which aims to further strengthen corporate services through partnership and collaboration.			
<b>Project Management Office:</b> Re-establish to improve monitoring/oversight/control of resources across all projects and programmes. Define methodology and develop approach - will benefit delivery of CCC's ambition, workloads, prioritisation, risk management.	New Programme Management Office and gateway process established with additional project resources secured through strategic plan delivery plan resource allocations.	Completed	Closed November 2023	Cllr. David King / Richard Block
<b>Key Performance Indicators:</b> Review to ensure relevant for the future.	Full review of Key Performance Indicators conducted and new Key Performance Indicators linked to new Strategic Plan adopted by Cabinet in June.	Completed	Closed November 2023	Richard Block

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

6. **Transformation and Organisational Development** – CBC needs to reset and realign its organisation to reflect resource pressures and significant changes in working arrangements to support residents effectively, as Colchester’s communities grow.

<b>Hybrid Working and New Values</b>
<b>Better define with your staff what ‘hybrid working’ means for CCC and provide a clear definition. Also, clarify how the new CCC values will be designed and embedded, communicating to staff how these define the Council and will help achieve Colchester’s ambition</b>

Recommendation	What we have done <i>(Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)</i>	What we will do	When will we do it?	Lead Officer / Portfolio Holder
Define and communicate hybrid working	Action delivered Rowan House working group has worked together to develop Hybrid principles and Rowan House Guidance: <b><u><a href="#">Link to Principles for working well together in a hybrid world</a></u></b> <b><u><a href="#">Link to Rowan House Hub guidance - making the Hub work for all</a></u></b>	No further action	Oct 2023 Action closed. Hybrid working policy and Rowan House guidance in place.	Jess Douglas
<b>New CCC values:</b> Clarify how these will be designed and embedded. Communicate to staff how these will define the Council and help achieve Colchester’s ambitions.	New values have been developed with the Speak Up Now Group and have been featured in all staff webinars Culture change programmed embedded in Organisational Development plan which is progressing		Oct 2023 Delivered and closed	Jess Douglas

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

<p><b>Internal upgrading:</b> Consider ways to balance this with external recruitment.</p>	<p>This is already in place. A key priority in the People Strategy is to consider internal talent and succession before any external recruitment. This has been facilitated by the recruitment freeze also.</p>		<p>Oct 2023 Closed - delivered</p>	<p>Jess Douglas</p>
<p><b>Reward and Recognition programme:</b> Revisit to ensure inclusive re nominations and decisions.</p>	<p>Work has started on reviewing the reward and recognition programme to align with new vision, purpose and values.</p>	<p>New reward and recognition scheme to be launched during all vision, purpose, values webinar.</p>	<p>Closed November 2023</p>	<p>Jess Douglas</p>
<p><b>Programme management office:</b> Put in place new strengthened PMO</p>	<p>New Programme Management Office and gateway process established with additional project resources secured through strategic plan delivery plan resource allocations.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>Closed November 2023</p>	<p>Richard Block</p>
<p><b>Shared services:</b> Discussions progressing across Essex</p>	<p>Shared Service programme launched with Epping and Braintree with interim shared Section 151 officer and shared Service Director for Digital and Transformation now in place. Further opportunities being considered across a range of services including finance, Human Resources, Revenues and Benefits, Building Control and Waste.</p>	<p>A full Shared Service Programme now in place for shared back-office functionality. This will be measured and monitored via the Transformation Programme</p>	<p>Closed November 2023</p>	<p>Richard Block</p>

# Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

7. **Regeneration and Growth** - Colchester, now a city, plays into some important strategic arrangements and has a strong place-based focus when exploring the opportunities ahead for devolution through the Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds.

## Review of CCHL and CBH

**Commission an independent review of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd, and its subsidiaries, also undertake an internal review of Colchester Borough Homes to assess whether the companies are realising the benefits they were established to deliver**

Recommendation	What we have done <i>(Presented to Cabinet 25/01/23) and evidenced in LGA Progress Review 27 July 2023)</i>	What we will do	When will we do it?	Lead Officer / Portfolio Holder
<p><b>Role review of CCHL and CBH:</b> To define CCHL and CBH future role in capital projects. To be picked up in CCHL and CBH reviews.</p>	<p>The future role of Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited in the delivery of capital projects is being explored as part of the review of the companies. A recommendation will be considered by Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited Board and Cabinet in June 23. The relationship between Colchester Borough Homes / Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited and Colchester City Council in terms of assets and facilities management is being explored as part of the asset strategy.</p> <p><b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - The Council has also established a councillor group to oversee delivery of action plans for CCHL and CBH.</p>	<p>Work continues and is being done as part of the ongoing reviews of both CCHL and CBH.</p> <p>The progress will be reported in the open actions entitled: CCHL Review CBH Review</p> <p>As a result, it is proposed that this action is closed.</p>	<p>Closed Oct 2023</p>	<p>Lindsay Barker</p>



## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	This work has been completed at pace and significant progress has been made, the LGA see this work as notable practice			
<p><b>CBH review:</b> Undertake a review to understand if there is an overlap between CCC services and the work of CBH. Can be in-house review</p>	<p>A risk assessment was commissioned in December 2022 by Housing Quality Network. It identified risks, issues and opportunities in partnership with Colchester City Council and Colchester Borough Homes. A new chair of Colchester Borough Homes was appointed in May 2023 An action plan to respond to the Housing Quality Network recommendations has been agreed and is mainly completed. It has been developed with the shareholder team and reported into the oversight member group (outlined above) <b>From LGA Progress Review – July 2023</b> - The Housing Quality Network completed a review of Colchester Borough Homes and an action plan created, with a new board Chair appointed.</p>	All the actions recommended by The Housing Quality Network review carried out in December 2022 have been completed and reported at CCC/CBH Principal Liaison	Closed Oct 2023	Lindsay Barker
<p><b>Regeneration and growth agenda:</b> Take a more proactive approach to target the sectors CCC wants to attract to its area.</p>	<p>The new Economic Strategy was adopted by Council in March 2023 and outlines the key sectors and opportunities. Colchester City Council has also contributed to the North Essex Economic Strategy refresh which will</p>	Colchester City Council will use their Economic Strategy to ensure clear focus and direction in their efforts to target the sectors they wish to attract to the area. This is a BAU activity, and the specific action can be closed.	Closed Oct 2023	Lindsay Barker

## Peer Challenge Action Plan Update – November 2023

	<p>identify regional opportunities to progress. Colchester City Council supported the launch of the Care Tech sector initiative in May 2023 which it developed and is now appropriately led by Essex County, Essex University and the Integrated Care Board.</p>			
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