

# Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Meeting

**Online Meeting, Virtual Meeting Platform  
Wednesday, 17 June 2020 at 18:00**

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

## Information for Members of the Public

### Access to information and meetings

You have the right to observe all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Cabinet including those which may be conducted online such as by live audio or video broadcast / webcast. You also have the right to see the agenda (the list of items to be discussed at a meeting), which is usually published five working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published. Dates of the meetings are available here: <https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/MeetingCalendar.aspx>.

Occasionally certain issues, for instance, commercially sensitive information or details concerning an individual have to be considered in private. When this is the case an announcement will be made, the live broadcast will end and the meeting will be moved to consider the matter in private.

### Have Your Say!

The Council welcomes contributions in the form of written representations from members of the public at most public meetings. One single contribution to each meeting of no longer than 500 words may be made by each person which must be submitted via the form accessed by this link, before noon on the working day before the meeting date:

[Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Have Your Say!](#)

If you would like to submit representations to a meeting and need to find out more, please refer to the Have Your Say! arrangements here:

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

E-mail: [democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk)

[www.colchester.gov.uk](http://www.colchester.gov.uk)

## **Policy and Public Initiatives Panel – Terms of Reference**

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

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**Policy and Public Initiatives Panel**  
**Wednesday, 17 June 2020 at 18:00**

**The Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Members are:**

Councillor Christopher Arnold  
Councillor Phil Coleman  
Councillor John Jowers  
Councillor Derek Loveland  
Councillor Sam McCarthy  
Councillor Lee Scordis  
Councillor Martyn Warnes

**The Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Substitute Members are:**

All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members.

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

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

**Live Broadcast**

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

<https://www.youtube.com/user/ColchesterCBC>

**1 Appointment of Chairman**

To appoint a Chairman for the forthcoming Municipal Year

**2 Appointment of Deputy Chairman**

To appoint a Deputy Chairman for the forthcoming Municipal Year

**3 Welcome and Announcements (Virtual Meetings)**

The Chairman will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chairman will invite all Councillors and Officers participating in the meeting to introduce themselves. The Chairman will, at regular intervals, ask Councillors to indicate if they wish to speak or ask a question and Councillors will be invited to speak in turn by the Chairman. A vote on each item of business will be taken by roll call of each Councillor and the outcome of each vote will be confirmed by the Democratic Services Officer.

**4 Substitutions**

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

**5 Urgent Items**

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

**6 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 pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest.

**7 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Councillors will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2020 are a correct record.

**Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Minutes 04 March 2020**

7 - 14

**8 Have Your Say! (Virtual Meetings)**

Members of the public may submit one written submission of no more than 500 words for consideration by the meeting which must be submitted online by noon on the working day before the meeting date. The Chairman will read out each submission either at the start of the meeting if it relates to a general matter or immediately before the officer presentation if it relates to an item of business being considered at the meeting.

**9 Public Initiatives**

The Panel will hear from members of the public who wish to suggest ideas for review by the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel. Arrangements for this item would be the same as Have Your Say.

**10 Review of actions from Panel recommendations in 2019/20**

15 - 34

This report provides a summary of actions and workstreams which have followed on from recommendations made by the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel during the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

**11 Approach to Council and Panel's work programme 2020-21**

35 - 40

This report sets out items for current Work Programme 2020-2021 for the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel, providing details of the items of business currently scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.

This report also sets out a suggested approach to inclusion of future

topics for the work programme for 2020-2021, taking into account the effects of the current Coronavirus pandemic and ensuring alignment with the work that is taking place on the development of the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plan.

12 **Exclusion of the Public (not Scrutiny or Executive)**

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

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

## **POLICY AND PUBLIC INITIATIVES PANEL**

### **4 March 2020**

**Attendees:** Councillors Arnold, Coleman, Loveland, Scordis and Warnes.

**Substitutes:** Councillor Hazell for Councillor Jowers.  
Councillor Hogg for Councillor Coleman.

**Also Present:** Councillors Fox, Scott-Boutell and T. Young.

#### **49. Minutes**

*RESOLVED* that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### **50. Public Initiatives**

**Councillor Chuah (by reason of being a member of King Coel's Kittens and being involved with administration of the annual 5 November Castle Park fireworks display) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).**

Councillor Scott-Boutell attended and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel to request that the Panel seek Cabinet approval to consider ways in which the Council could enforce restrictions on when and where members of the public are legally permitted to use fireworks. This stemmed from concerns regarding the effects of unexpected fireworks use on vulnerable residents and on pets and other animals in the area.

Councillor Scott-Boutell advocated for the introduction of an enforcement policy by the Council, to guide enforcement and act as a basis on which to lobby the Government for action on the national level. Additional actions requested included encouragements for people to attend official firework displays instead of holding their own, a publicity campaign on the negative effects of firework use, lobbying of the Government, lobbying of the County Council to use trading standards action to enforce laws on sale of fireworks and encouragement of moves to limit the number of vendors selling fireworks.

Councillor Chuah described the annual Bonfire Night fireworks display organised and held by King Coel's Kittens. This adhered to all Health and Safety requirements and was full staffed by stewards and security, with all proceeds being given to charity.

Panel members considered the increase in use of fireworks by members of the public through the year and discussed the effects of this, and the approaches which could be taken. A member of the Panel noted that the Panel would need first to know

what powers of enforcement the Council already held, especially in relation to Council-owned land (including residential areas). It was recommended that the Panel receive a report on this from the Council's Environmental Health Team, prior to any future consideration of the issue. A further member of the Panel posited that efforts should be focussed on increasing public awareness of the law and effects of fireworks, rather than on enforcement.

*RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that the Panel be given approval to investigate ways for the Council to reduce antisocial uses of fireworks and add this public initiative/policy request to its work programme for 2020/21.

## **51. Universal Credit**

Jason Granger, Customer Solutions Manager, introduced the report, and his colleagues helping to present the item: Karen Williams, Head of Housing Management for Colchester Borough Homes (CBH), and Dave Cope, District Operations Manager for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

The background to welfare changes was given, including the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which had led to the under-occupancy penalty and to Universal Credit being rolled out. It was noted that government funding for discretionary housing payments had increased during this time, with the Council contributing a further £50k of funding on top of this.

The Council had employed a proactive and collaborative response to support residents through the changes to welfare, working with partner organisations and the DWP and providing advice on welfare changes, employment and debt issues. The Customer Support Team formed by the Council and based in the Colchester Library Community Hub had been set up to assist residents, especially those with complex needs or a high level of vulnerability.

Adoption of Universal Credit in Colchester began in 2015 with a limited cohort of claimants. This combined six separate 'legacy' benefits, including housing benefit, into one single payment. This expanded to a 'full service' model in 2018, with greater migration of claimants.

The DWP had funded the creation of a dedicated post of Community Support Officer to assist members of the public who were most in need of help and advice.

The migration to Universal Credit caused an increase in applications for discretionary housing payments, with roughly half of all claims coming from recipients of Universal Credit. There had also been impacts on CBH.

The Head of Housing Management for CBH detailed some of the effects experienced by the organisation. Early work carried out by the Council and CBH had given a good base upon which to base the migration to Universal Credit, working and engaging with partners and the DWP to assist residents. Additional resources had been needed for this, and the level of rent arrears was now £100k higher than twelve months previously. However, the average level of tenant arrears locally was approximately £250, compared to a national average of £320, and there had been zero evictions of Universal Credit claimants caused by rent arrears to date.



The work of officers was described, including the CBH Financial Inclusion Team, comprising of a welfare rights officer, a financial inclusion officer and a benefits officer. In addition to this, and with support by Citizens Advice (CA), officers had conducted outreach work, offering advice to residents in their homes. The importance of partnership working was stressed.

The District Operations Manager for DWP informed the Panel that Colchester Borough Council was seen as an exemplar regarding collaborative working and relationship-building to ease the migration to Universal Credit and assist residents with welfare-related issues. Greater and more-effective work had been carried out in Colchester than in many areas elsewhere, and this had led to DWP using their discretionary funds to fund the creation of the Community Support Officer role, and the Department's intention to further expand this role.

The timeline of the roll-out of Universal Credit was summarised. There had been difficulties experienced and the timescale for full roll-out had been extended, with Universal Credit evolving to reflect lessons learned from the experiences gained. Examples of this included that direct payment of housing costs to landlords from Universal Credit was now possible where this was appropriate, and that additional flexibility had been introduced to allow non-digitally-active claimants to more-easily complete claims without needing online access.

The collaborative, multi-agency approaches used had made it possible to better tailor Universal Credit claims to the individual claimants and provide better support for claimants.

There continued to be problems for some claimants, and it was stressed that the key route to solving these was to build local, personal relationships between the DWP and partners such as the Council.

Commencing the Panel's discussion, thanks were offered to the guests and Panel members welcomed the information that Colchester was seen as an exemplar authority on addressing welfare reform and its effects. It was noted that effective work on this could save lives of those who were vulnerable, and thanks were given to those officers who had worked to ensure that individual arrears levels had been managed so that no eviction proceedings had been needed against Universal Credit recipients. A Panel Member highlighted the Council's Customer Department for their exceptional performance, and the work carried out to pre-empt the needs of residents in the Borough.

The Panel questioned whether the workload and number of cases being managed had increased, year on year. The Head of Housing Management confirmed that there had been an increase in the number of cases being managed. Officers were adapting to their evolving roles and working to adapt quickly. The management of cases, and avoidance of any evictions had a knock-on positive effect of avoiding additional pressure on the allocations process and the temporary/emergency accommodation available to the Council.

The District Operations Manager for DWP agreed that the number of cases being managed had increased and that more people were being assisted regarding claims

and dealing with complex situations. The DWP understood the importance of taking a holistic view of people and their personal hierarchies of needs.

It was now expected that full migration from legacy benefits over to payments via Universal Credit would be achieved by 2024. It was stressed that whilst civil servants within DWP were not professional social workers, training and support had been provided to increase skills of relevant officers to a high level in order for them to provide a high level of support to claimants and recipients.

Councillor Fox, Portfolio Holder for Housing, attended and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel, praising both the work of partner agencies and organisations working with the Council, and the work carried out by Council officers to prepare and support residents through changes to welfare and to rent levels. The Customer Department had performed particularly well, especially in the context of reduced funding, and a key priority was to address any fears caused by the process for individuals to engage with Universal Credit.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing gave assurance that information provision and transparency would remain priorities for the Council and noted that Panels/Committees within the Council may wish to revisit this topic in the future.

*RESOLVED* that the Panel had reviewed the actions taken to date by the Council, Colchester Borough Homes and the Department for Work and Pensions and that the Panel expressed its thanks to all involved for the work that they had carried out.

## **52. Review of Political Management Arrangements**

Andrew Weavers, Monitoring Officer, introduced the report which provided information on the Cabinet and Leader model, the Committee System model, their advantages and disadvantages and the history of political management arrangements at the Council since 1972.

The Council had operated the Committee system model from 1972 until 2001 when, in the wake of the Local Government Act 2000 and a subsequent consultation process, the Council had adopted the Leader and Cabinet model. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 had required local authorities to reconsider their political management arrangements and introduced the 'strong leader' concept, investing the leader with executive powers. The amended Leader and Cabinet model was again chosen following a public consultation.

The Localism Act 2011 reintroduced the option for local authorities to adopt an updated version of the Committee system model, and it was noted that any decision to move to a Committee system would be based on that model, rather than the original 1972 version.

The Panel were notified that all but three local authorities in Essex operated the Leader and Cabinet model. Assurance was given that the Monitoring Officer keeps the current constitution and management arrangements under review and recommends any changes which they feel to be beneficial.

The Monitoring Officer explained the differences and similarities in the committees that are found in the two different models of management arrangements. Under the Committee system, service committees took decisions that were made by Cabinet or Portfolio Holders operating under the Cabinet and Leader model. The Cabinet and Leader model incorporated a statutory duty to operate an oversight and scrutiny committee, whilst this is optional under the Committee system model (if opted for, it holds the same powers as under the Cabinet and Leader model but operates as a committee of Council).

It was highlighted that a major benefit of the Cabinet and Leader model was the expedited decision-making which could be carried out, especially if a scheme of delegation to individual portfolio holders had been opted for. Authorities which did not opt to adopt such a scheme required more frequent meetings if they are to consider all executive decisions and still avoid a slowing of their executive decision making. It was stressed that decisions under this model still needed to be taken in line with the principles of openness and accountability, allowing opportunities for challenge where necessary.

The roles of the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel and task and finish groups at the Council were described.

The Monitoring Officer advised that, in his view, the current political management arrangements were fit for purpose and helped the Council in achieving timely decision making. It was, however, open to the Panel to consider what recommendations they might wish to make.

The Panel were informed of the preparatory work which would be necessary in the event that a change to adopt the Committee system model were to be considered by the Council. A significant amount of officer time and resource would be needed to scope and explore such a move, and the cost of this could not be estimated until initial plans and details are first set in place to guide this work. Should such a move be proposed, there would be no statutory duty to consult on a change to the Council's political management arrangements, however it was the Monitoring Officer's strong advice that public consultation should be carried out before deciding upon such a change.

It was noted that adoption of the Committee system model would necessitate a review of councillors' allowances.

Councillor Tim Young attended and, with the permission of the Chairman, addressed the Panel to pay tribute to Alderman Ken Cooke and his work and contribution to Colchester, and to speak on the Cabinet and Committee models for political management.

Councillor Young informed the Panel that he had had experience of both systems whilst serving as a councillor at this Council. He noted certain drawbacks of the Committee system model, including slow decision making, inefficiencies, not always getting to the heart of issues, committees splitting on party lines and the greater power of officers to set agendas. The system did involve more members in decision making, but did not necessarily give wider experience or power to councillors.

In comparison, Councillor Young posited that the Cabinet system was preferable, but that improvements could be made in the way that the Council operates this system in Colchester Borough. One example given was a recommendation that the operation of the Scrutiny Panel be strengthened and operated more in the style of a select committee, giving backbench councillors more power and involvement. It was noted that the Licensing and Planning Committees provided opportunities for backbench councillors to gain experience of decision making and the exercise of powers. The Committees currently in operation were working, but Councillor Young gave the view that their operation could be further improved.

Commencing the Panel's deliberations, Councillor Arnold explained that he had requested that the different forms of political management arrangements be discussed following requests from Colchester's High Steward, Sir Bob Russell, that the Council consider whether to return to using the Committee system model. Sir Bob was a former councillor who had served for many years on the Council and had experienced the Committee system model.

Councillor Arnold clarified that he was not advocating a return to the 'old' style of Committee system but had concerns at some of the effects of operating under the Cabinet and Leader system. These included a perceived lack of transparency and information sharing regarding actions by the administration, as evidenced by recent work conducted with Citizens' Advice, of which opposition councillors were unaware, and by a perceived lack of information on the North Essex Garden Communities Project. Much work had been carried out by portfolio holders without backbencher councillors being informed. This made it more difficult for backbench councillors to hold the administration to account and to properly conduct scrutiny of decision making.

Councillor Arnold ventured that there was now less briefing on portfolio holder actions and reduced opportunity to question members of the Cabinet, with the 'Questions to Cabinet Members' item now at a lower/late position on the agenda for Full Council meetings, which could give the impression that it is seen as being less important.

It was argued that the Committee system model allowed new councillors an opportunity to learn processes, get to know officers and build relationships. The current Cabinet model was described as preventing this, with decisions often being discussed in private Leadership Team meetings and only given minimal discussion in the ensuing public Cabinet meeting. In comparison, the Committee system ensured that decision making occurred in public and allowed for greater transparency.

The Panel discussed the report and the views proffered. A Panel member gave the view that the current Cabinet and Leader arrangements were more positive for allowing quicker decision-making, although there could be difficulties. Support was given for the suggestion that the Scrutiny Panel should play a bigger, more activist role, including an increase in call ins by councillors.

A Panel member stated that their experience was that members of Cabinet were open to discuss issues with, and provide information to, councillors from all political groups, and that councillors should request this if they wished to discuss any matters

under consideration by the administration.

A further member of the Panel, through their personal experience, agreed with the view that the Committee system that had previously been in operation was somewhat vague and slow to operate.

Building on this, another Panel member gave their experiences and noted that there had been successes under the previous Committee system, such as the completion of a full property audit, and the establishing of the Colchester Women's Refuge, and that wider discussions had been possible on issues and decisions. However, the member viewed any potential move to a future Committee system as being expensive, requiring a torturous process, and be difficult to produce a system which commanded support across the Council Chamber. This led to the suggestion that the Cabinet and Leader model should be retained, but with improvements, such as a strengthened Scrutiny function, greater information sharing with backbench councillors and more transparency around executive decision making.

The Chairman summarised the positives and negatives which had been ascribed to the two different types of political administrative arrangements possible for the Council to operate. The Committee system model was generally seen as less efficient, could provide more involvement for members but also could potentially put more power into the hands of officers. The Committee model was seen as being more transparent and enabling decision making and discussion in public, however a return to this model was seen by some members as being expensive and complex.

The Cabinet and Leader system had strengths and drawbacks, but the potential for a more active and activist Scrutiny Panel was highlighted and recommended. More transparency from Cabinet and better communications with councillors and the public were also recommended, alongside the provision of better opportunities for councillors to question Portfolio Holders. Decision making could be explained more fully to councillors and the public, with more information to be provided to opposition groups on the Council, especially with regard to the Council's commercial bodies and partnerships.

The Monitoring Officer summarised the themes raised as relating to three key issues of transparency, communication and scrutiny. He noted that, regarding North Essex Garden Communities Ltd, the minutes of their Board meetings were published on the company's website. The Monitoring Officer also notified members that Full Council can move and approve a motion to change the order of Council meeting agendas, to have questions to Cabinet Members occur earlier in meetings.

The Panel were informed that the current Scrutiny Panel possessed all due statutory powers, and it was suggested that the Panel should explore and exercise the powers which it already possessed, including the making of more recommendations. A Panel member raised concern that the scheduling of items for Scrutiny Panel consideration currently appeared to be heavily officer-led, and that the Scrutiny Panel needed to be more assertive in laying out its work programme.

The Monitoring Officer agreed that transparency of Portfolio Holder decision making was an issue that had been identified and asked if the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel may wish to make a recommendation regarding this. A potential change could be to revive briefings of the Scrutiny Panel by Portfolio Holders. Members agreed

that this could be a positive way to give backbench councillors an opportunity to learn more about each portfolio.

The Panel discussed the budget-setting process for the Council and agreed that it would be beneficial for training and briefings for all councillors on the budget process would be desirable and would allow for effective scrutiny of budgets and the proposal of meaningful amendments. More training would result in better debate and challenge. One member noted that it was currently possible to ask for officer assistance in understanding subjects such as budget setting, however it was agreed that additional training sessions would be a positive thing.

*RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that the Cabinet and Leader model of political administration be retained, subject to the following enhancements: -

- (a) Additional training and briefings on the budget setting process, to be provided for all councillors.
- (b) Cabinet to bring a motion to Full Council to decide whether to raise questions to Cabinet Members up the agenda.
- (c) Cabinet to acknowledge the importance of the Scrutiny Panel and advocate that the Panel exercise their powers to a greater degree, produce more recommendations and be assertive in their role as a 'critical friend.'
- (d) Cabinet to request that the Scrutiny Panel consider re-introducing regular Portfolio question and answer sessions.

### **53. Work Programme 2019/20**

The Panel considered the draft Work Programme for 2019/20 and noted that, as this was the final meeting for the Panel in the current municipal year, the initiative brought to this meeting by Councillor Scott-Boutell would, if approved by Cabinet, need to be added to the Panel's Work Programme for 2020/21. The Panel requested that a report on the Council's powers regarding fireworks enforcement be provided to Panel members prior to any consideration of the issue.

*RESOLVED* that: -

- (a) The Work Programme for 2019/20 be noted
- (b) A report detailing current enforcement powers held by the Council regarding fireworks be provided to the Panel in the event that Cabinet approve it to examine the issues regarding use of fireworks by the public.

17 June 2020

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Assistant Director, Place and Client Services</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Owen Howell</b> ☎ 282518
<b>Title</b>	<b>Review of actions from Panel recommendations in 2019/20</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	Not Applicable		

**1. Executive Summary**

1.1 This report provides a summary of actions and workstreams which have followed on from recommendations made by the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel during the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

**2. Action Required**

2.1 To note the actions reported.

**3. Reason for Review**

3.1 Following requests for a report to inform the Panel of progress made in relation to the recommendations it made in 2019/20, officers confirmed that this would be provided in 2020/21.

**4. Background Information**

4.1 In 2019/20, the Panel made a number of recommendations relating to the subjects which it considered. The recommendations made are given below, with information given on the work which has progressed from them. A list of all requests made for Cabinet to approve the addition of items to the Panel's Work Programme can be found at Appendix A.

Recommendations made relating to services and enforcement relating to dog owners (made on 19 June 2019).

4.2 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that:-

- (i) The Council website is updated to include a responsible dog ownership page to provide dog owners with information on responsible dog ownership and compliance with the law;
- (ii) The Animal Services Team continue to support the free CBC Neighbourhood Team events, CBH 'Make A Difference Days' and Police-led events;
- (iii) The Council continue to provide a free dog microchipping service;
- (iv) A publicity drive is carried out to increase public awareness of Council enforcement action regarding dog fouling;
- (v) The existing Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) covering the Colchester Rugby Club is expanded to cover all play areas and sports pitches in Colchester Borough and that this is publicised;
- (vi) The Council pursue a multi-agency approach to tackle fouling issues, where practical, and direct Neighbourhood Teams to temporarily increase

their presence in areas where dog fouling is known to be common, followed by publicity of enforcement action taken.

- 4.3 Following Cabinet's approval of the recommendations made by the Panel, officers from Neighbourhood Services acted and have confirmed the following:
- The PSPO covering Mill Road Rugby Club is still in place and will remain in place until 1 November 2020.
  - Before the introduction of lock-down to combat Covid-19, there was a rota in place for all wardens to patrol the PSPO area and fixed penalty notices have been issued, when needed, as enforcement action against dog fouling and owners allowing dogs to be off their leads in the area.
  - At the current time the Council does not have the capacity to carry out enforcement action on a large scale, but the wardens for this area continue to carry out patrols and the area has now been added for weekend patrols.
  - The Council has now made a Borough-wide PSPO targeted at preventing dog fouling. This PSPO came in to force on 25 November 2019 and is currently scheduled to end after three years, on 25 November 2022

Recommendation relating to the Council's preference for segregated cycleways and footways (made on 31 July 2019).

- 4.4 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that a letter be sent to Essex County Council [ECC], supporting the work of Councillor Bentley [Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, ECC] in examining this issue, noting protocols and statutory consultation rights regarding cycleway installations, and stating Colchester Borough Council's support for segregated cycleways, wherever feasible.
- 4.5 The Cabinet Office has confirmed that Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation, wrote to Councillor Bentley on 24 October 2019 to raise the issues in question, and give the Council's preferences regarding cycleways and footways. A copy of this letter is appended to this report as Appendix B.

Recommendations relating to supporting the use and protection of the River Colne (made on 31 July 2019).

- 4.6 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that: -
- a) The Cabinet approves the drafting of a vision document for a River Colne partnership involving all local authorities along the Colne, stakeholders and interested others to seek out funding and implement a vision that accounts for the upper, middle and lower River Colne and estuary, to be developed in a phased way starting with access and control and with the Hythe and funding options as focal points, and;
  - b) This document be brought back to the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel for further discussion and public comment before being sent to the Cabinet for approval.
- 4.7 Following Cabinet approval of these recommendations, Catherine Bailey, Planning Policy Officer, spearheaded the work to be carried out to pursue work towards the drafting of a vision document. Up to the point at which the Covid-19 lockdown came into force, the main areas of progress were:
- Cabinet approval for the drafting of a vision document given in September 2019



- An Officer group meeting was held on 13 December 2019 to discuss the brief for this work
- The New Strategic Priorities River Project Board was set up January 2020 and further funding for this work was agreed
- A project brief was developed through January and February 2020, and a copy is appended to this report as Appendix C
- The Final Brief was sent out to tender on 21 February 2020
- One return was received from Land Use Consultants on 6 March 2020

4.8 Unfortunately, owing to the effects of the situation relating to Covid-19, the Vision project is on hold for the time being as it is substantially about stakeholder engagement. It would have been exceedingly difficult to initiate meaningful and comprehensive engagement under lock-down/social distancing conditions.

4.9 Because the funds for this work were not yet committed in early March 2020, officers were advised that it may be necessary for these funds to be redirected to support front-line service provision during lockdown. At time of writing this report, the financial effects of the Covid-19 crisis are still being assessed insofar as these affect the Council's income and expenditure and the Medium-Term Financial Forecast (MTFF). The Council is conducting financial scenario planning and implementing recovery operations. The funding initially agreed for the work of the River Project Board may be reassessed in light of these efforts.

Recommendations relating to the potential for a Youth Zone to be set up in the Colchester Borough (made on 27 November 2019).

- 4.10 *RECOMMENDATION* to CABINET: - That, in light of the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel's support for the potential provision of a Colchester Youth Zone, the Cabinet:
- (a) Conducts a forensic 'deep-dive' examination of potential funding for a Colchester Youth Zone, to ensure sustainability of both capital and revenue funding;
  - (b) Examines options for partnership working on a Colchester Youth Zone, with priority given to securing the partnership and support of Essex County Council;
  - (c) Assesses the potential impacts that a Colchester Youth Zone would have within the Borough, including impacts on reducing antisocial and criminal behaviour, improving health, skills and life opportunities for young people and long-term benefits for the wider communities of the Borough.
- 4.11 As had been explained at the Panel's meeting on 27 November 2019, an options appraisal was already underway, having been commissioned previously by Cabinet to look at Youth Provision across Colchester and to consider what works well, if there are gaps and going forward what options there are for improvement. Following this, if it was agreed that a Youth Zone was the right way forward then part of the project work would include a more in-depth feasibility looking at key elements such as location and funding.
- 4.12 The initial Options Appraisal was fed back to the Council's Leadership in early March and did suggest that a Youth Zone would provide benefits to Colchester and that there were gaps in current Youth Provision. Given this feedback, Leadership invited Onside (the charity which facilitates Youth Zone provision) to a meeting to discuss the next steps. Whilst still very keen to pursue a Youth Zone for Colchester, the practicalities of finding a suitable location and raising the funding required were recognised as a huge challenge especially given that

Essex County Council (ECC) have informally said it does not support this approach.

- 4.13 Key partners have been engaged, with Police, Health and Voluntary Sector partners amongst those who are supportive of a Youth Zone. ECC have however not formally confirmed their support and this would be key to progressing, given the funding required. No specific partner funding has been secured at this time and, given the Covid-19 crisis, further talks have halted.
- 4.14 Whilst the vision to deliver a Youth Zone in Colchester is still an ambition, no further steps have been taken at this time given the impact of Covid-19 hitting the Country and the sudden shift in priorities and focus that this has necessitated for the Council.
- 4.15 Onside and the Council's options appraisal both shared more generic learning from existing Youth Zones that demonstrated that very positive outcomes are possible; this was also shared with the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel by Onside. No further exploration of this has taken place but would be a key element of any future project should Cabinet decide to proceed.
- 4.16 It has been acknowledged that Cabinet were fully supportive of the idea of a Youth Zone and had progressed to discussions with Onside, the providers, and partners. Whilst acknowledging that the funding required would be a huge challenge, and would require the support of Essex County Council, there is great evidence from existing Youth Zones that these facilities make a massive difference to the lives of Young People and so discussions were ongoing. The Covid-19 crisis has however now halted any further work at this time. Given the severity of the crisis on the Council, Businesses and Communities of Colchester, the Council's recovery planning will include a review of priorities. Whilst the provision of a Youth Zone remains an ambition that may be needed more than ever in the years to come, the reality of delivering one has become an even greater challenge that the Council cannot face alone.

Recommendation that options be explored for High Street traffic reduction (made on 20 January 2020)

- 4.17 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that alongside consultation and engagement exercises linked to each of the above work programmes, Officers commission a study looking at the options for reducing traffic in the High Street.
- 4.18 Rachel Forkin, Transport and Sustainability Manager has confirmed that the Council has not yet commissioned a study looking at options for reducing traffic in the High Street. This work is linked with the Colchester Transport Strategy, which is being produced by ECC in partnership with CBC. However, timescales for this study and engagement exercises have been impacted by the current situation regarding Covid-19 and a new timescale will need to be calculated.
- 4.19 In addition to this, this work will now need to be closely linked with plans for recovery in the town centre and the new statutory Government guidance on reallocating road space in response to COVID-19. The guidelines set out how 'the government expects local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians. Such changes will help embed altered behaviours and demonstrate the positive effects of active travel.'

- 4.20 ECC have released a press release setting out how they are looking to achieve this in town centres in Essex.
- 4.21 The relevant Government guidance can be found via the following link:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>

Recommendation relating to secure cycle storage provision (made on 20 January 2020)

- 4.22 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that officers be directed to explore options for secure and covered public cycle storage in the Town Centre and at key locations, and explore options for secure and covered cycle storage in residential areas, consulting with residents as appropriate and sourcing information as to the cost of potential options to meet identified demand. This should be carried out as part of wider work already progressing on cycle initiatives and efforts to complete the network of cycle routes in Colchester.
- 4.23 The Council has completed the tender process and are currently in the process of appointing consultants to carry out this work. This should start in the very near future, although the current circumstances regarding Covid-19 will have an impact on site visits and consultation. This work will cover both identifying key locations and options (e.g. management, type of facility) for secure cycle parking in the town centre, as well as exploring options for secure cycle parking facilities in residential areas, and will link in with the wider work progressing on cycle initiatives within Colchester.
- 4.24 Rachel Forkin, Transport and Sustainability Manager, is currently working with the teams looking at recovery in the town centre, with regard to cycle parking facilities. However, at this stage no further information on this is yet available.

Recommendation regarding enforcement against antisocial use of fireworks (made on 4 March 2020)

- 4.25 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that the Panel be given approval to investigate ways for the Council to reduce antisocial uses of fireworks and add this public initiative/policy request to its work programme for 2020/21.
- 4.26 This recommendation is currently awaiting Cabinet approval. Should approval be granted, the Panel will be able to add this subject to its Work Programme.

Recommendations to Cabinet requesting approval for the Panel to add items to its Work Programme

- 4.27 During 2019/20, The Panel made a number of requests seeking Cabinet approval for it to investigate a range of issues. These are all included in the list of recommendations shown at Appendix A. All requests were granted, with exception of the following, made on 25 September 2020:
- 4.28 *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that approval be given for the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel to examine potential options for providing or supporting the provision of a new lifelong learning centre in the Borough of Colchester.

4.29 Cabinet considered this recommendation but did not give approval. As the responsibility for adult learning provision was held by Essex County Council, it was considered that it would not be appropriate for consideration by the Panel.

## **5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

5.1 This report has no direct implications relating to Equality, Diversity or Human Rights; however due consideration is given to any such implications attached to the individual decision making and actions detailed within the report.

## **6. Standard References**

6.1 There are no specific references to consultation considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

7.1 This report details different project workstreams with numerous effects on, and implications for, the Council's Strategic Plan and Priorities. It should however be borne in mind that the Council's Strategic Plan may need to be revised in response to the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. In such an eventuality, project work will be reassessed, according to how it will help to achieve the priorities within any new Strategic Plan.

## **8. Publicity Considerations**

8.1 The reporting back on actions resulting from recommendations from the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel gives an opportunity to showcase positive work being carried out to achieve the Council's Strategic Plan and its priorities. This enables members of the public to gain a better understanding of different elements of the work undertaken by Council, especially where this is in relation to initiatives brought forward by members of the public.

## **9. Financial implications**

9.1 As noted in section 6 of this report, there are no direct financial implications. It is, however, important for the Panel to note that a reassessment may become necessary for any finances which had been identified for specific project work but not yet committed prior to the outbreak of Covid-19

## **14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

14.1 There are no specific environmental or sustainability implications.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – List of Work Programme recommendations made by the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel in 2019/20

Appendix B – Letter from Councillor Martin Goss, Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation, to County Councillor Kevin Bentley, ECC Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, regarding cycleways and footways

Appendix C – Project Brief for Colne River Vision Document

**Requests made by the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel seeking Cabinet approval for the Panel to consider specific initiatives and ideas**

19 June 2019

*RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that approval be given for the following items to be included in the Policy and Public Initiative Panel's work programme for the future:-

- (i) A review of the Council's Cabinet and Leader model of administrative arrangements to determine whether the Council should continue with these arrangements or revert to a committee model;
- (ii) To investigate the potential for providing a sports and social centre for young people, in the form of a Youth Zone;
- (iii) To investigate the provision of secure and covered bicycle parking options for Colchester.

25 September 2020

*RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that approval be given for the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel to examine potential options for providing or supporting the provision of a new lifelong learning centre in the Borough of Colchester.

4 March 2020

*RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that the Panel be given approval to investigate ways for the Council to reduce antisocial uses of fireworks and add this public initiative/policy request to its work programme for 2020/21.



Councillor Kevin Bentley  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for  
Infrastructure  
Members' Suite  
Essex County Council  
PO Box 11  
County Hall  
Chelmsford  
Essex  
CM1 1LX

**Cabinet Office**

Contact Councillor Martin Goss

E-mail [martin.goss@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:martin.goss@colchester.gov.uk)

Your ref

Our ref

Date 24 October 2019

Dear Councillor Bentley

Colchester Borough Council recognises that cycling has an important part to play in addressing the challenges in the town of congestion, air quality and population growth. The Borough Council wants Colchester to be a town where people can choose to travel safely and easily on a convenient cycle network across the town.

The Borough Council supports the commitment in the Essex Cycling Strategy to create the Cycling Action Plan for Colchester, establishing a coherent, comprehensive and advantageous cycle network utilising a combination of on-carriageway and off-carriageway cycle facilities. The Colchester Cycling Action Plan identifies potential cycle routes across the urban area of Colchester and reference is made to the use of the Sustrans Design Manual to inform the type of cycle route provision. The Borough Council welcomes the use of this guidance, and in particular welcomes the recommendation in the Plan that the conversion of footpaths and footways to shared use to permit bicycle use should not be regarded as a general or area-wide remedy. The Borough Council also welcomes the statement that ECC aims to limit the use of footway conversion/shared use paths and Engineers and Designers should first consider alternative options. The Borough Council considers that this is important and should apply to the design of all cycle schemes in the Colchester Borough.

Colchester Borough Council welcomes the continued partnership with the County Council, and continued consultation on proposed cycle schemes, to deliver improvements to existing cycle routes, and development of new cycle routes, throughout Colchester.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Martin Goss  
**Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment & Transportation**





## RIVER COLNE VISION

### PROJECT BRIEF TO DEVELOP A VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE ACCESS AND TOURISM OF THE RIVER COLNE FOR COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### SUMMARY

Colchester Borough Council (the “Council”) wishes to engage a specialist consultant (the “Consultant”) to create a vision for the River Colne in Colchester that celebrates its cultural heritage, protects its environmental importance, sustains appropriate economic benefits and stimulates partnership working to deliver this vision. The outputs will include:

- An overarching vision for the river that is supported by local partners and stakeholders
- Key priorities for the three-character zones
- Engagement with local partners
- A spatial representation of the vision that captures its ambition in a visual way
- Identification of the next steps and actions needed to deliver the vision
- A summary report of findings.

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The river Colne rises at Steeple Bumpstead in Braintree district and flows south east through Halstead and Wakes Colne to Colchester, where it becomes tidal before joining the Blackwater Estuary. The headwaters of the catchment, north-west of Colchester town are predominantly rural in nature, giving way to a more urban environment downstream at the town itself.<sup>1</sup>The river has three distinctive character zones (see plan attached at Appendix 1).

1.2 **Upper Colne (Rural River):** In this stretch the river flows through a rural landscape from west of Wakes Colne for about 9km until it reaches the A12 and the outskirts of urban Colchester. This countryside is important for its natural and historic environment, as well as providing the attractive landscape setting for both local villages and rural communities, such as Ford Street and Chappel and Colchester town itself. It also provides important agricultural, tourism and recreational opportunities. Popular with cyclists and walkers the area includes a section of the Essex Way and the impressive Chappel railway viaduct, popular pubs and visitor attractions such as the East Anglian Railway Museum (which also hosts highly popular events such as the Chappel Beer Festival and Thomas the Tank Engine Days) that create local employment and help support local economies and communities<sup>2</sup>.

1.3 **Urban River (Mid-Colne):** In Colchester town itself, the rich historic environment and river landscapes provide the basis for visitor attractions and experiences for visitors, such as the multi-award-winning Colchester Castle Museum, Castle Park, as well as enhancing the quality of life for local residents. Through the town, the river forms a natural corridor and amenity. There are riverside walking and cycle routes which could be extended giving traffic free routes for both commuting and leisure trips, and with links to the Town Centre, Wivenhoe, and the Rowhedge Trail. The Colchester Orbital, a circular trail around town, crosses the river in Cymbeline Meadows to the west of the town as well as near the University of Essex in The Hythe<sup>3</sup>. The Borough’s historic town centre is the focal point for visitor attractions, such as Colchester Castle as well as leisure and cultural attractions facilities such as the Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre and Firstsite visual art gallery. In addition, as a regional centre Colchester town is a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/OperationalCatchment/3098/Summary>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/info/cbc-article/?catid=emerging-local-plan&id=KA-02211>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/info/cbc-article/?catid=emerging-local-plan&id=KA-02196>

hub for shopping and entertainment and has a thriving social economy with three cinemas, pubs, cafes and restaurants. The town centre is also the key focus for development opportunities and challenges, including on the riverside. The Hythe area, to the east of the town, is a former commercial harbour which includes some rundown and underused industrial land in East Colchester. In the past few years, the eastern area of Colchester has experienced a period of significant change and growth. The area provides good access to Hythe Station but much of the Hythe area is in flood zone 3 and the river can form a barrier to movement.

1.4 **Colne Estuary (Lower Colne):** The open character of the Colne estuary is largely an undeveloped and rural landscape with a rich, diverse and irreplaceable natural asset in terms of its natural and cultural heritage. The ecological importance of the Colne Estuary is reflected by the variety of international and European designations covering them i.e. Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas (SPA) and the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive. The Colne Estuary is also protected as part of the larger Colne, Blackwater, Roach and Crouch Marine Conservation Zone. There are also a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites designated around the estuary.<sup>4</sup> The River's estuary is home to a number of sizeable communities and visitor destinations in Rowhedge and Wivenhoe, extending round to coastal communities such as West Mersea, which is world-famous for its oyster cultivation (Colchester Natives and Rock Oysters which could have potential for Protected Geographical Indication status). There are a number of diverse considerations and land uses which all need to be managed in an integrated way within this zone. These include internationally important habitats, land and water-based recreation, fishing, birding and archaeological and heritage assets. Obligations to protect the natural and heritage assets must be balanced against the need to satisfy the wider socio-economic aspirations of both residents and visitor communities. Climate change, including sea level rise presents increasing pressure on the management of estuary habitats and coastal communities along the Colne estuary fringe. A new coastal path is currently being planned by Natural England around the whole of England's coastline which includes the edge of the Colne estuary.

## 2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 **Local Plan Policy:** The Adopted Local Plan identifies a spatial vision that focusses development and regeneration in Colchester Town Centre and four gateway regeneration areas close to the town's centre, and to a lesser extent in district centres. Tourism is seen as central to the borough's regeneration whilst protecting the historic and natural character at the coast and in the countryside and enhancing key greenspaces and links. Core policies include:

- SD1 Sustainable Development Locations
- CE2a Town Centre: This includes that *'The Council will also encourage developments that create safe and attractive public spaces and a more balanced night-time economy.'*
- UR1 Regeneration Areas: includes East Colchester where development needs to *'... enhance the public realm, improve accessibility and address social deprivation'*.
- UR2 Built Design and Character: This emphasises that *'...Buildings, Conservation Areas, archaeological sites, parklands, views, the river and other features that contribute positively to the character of the built environment shall be protected from demolition or inappropriate development'*.
- TA2 Walking and Cycling: *'The Council will work with partners to promote walking and cycling as an integral and highly sustainable means of transport'*.
- ENV1 Environment: *'The Borough Council will conserve and enhance Colchester's natural and historic environment, countryside and coastline'. 'Within the Coastal Protection Belt development will not be permitted that would adversely affect the open and rural character'*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/info/cbc-article/?catid=emerging-local-plan&id=KA-02211>

*of the undeveloped coastline, and its historic features, sites of nature conservation importance and wildlife habitats.'*

**2.2 National Planning Policy:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises that planning policies and decisions should:

- contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment (paragraph 170)
- take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure (paragraph 171)
- Recognise the importance of green infrastructure in relation to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and wellbeing benefits in terms of quality of life.<sup>5</sup> And that:
- Heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for their contribution to quality of life (paragraph 184) and for their wider social, cultural and economic benefits (paragraph 185).

2.3 At the same time the NPPF recognises:

- The importance of economic growth along with barriers such as poor services and adverse environments (paragraph 81)
- That there is a role for sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside (paragraph 83).
- That access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is recognised as important for the health and well-being of communities
- Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land are vital (paragraph 97).
- That new or enhanced activity can contribute to healthy, inclusive and safe places (paragraph 91)
- That patterns of movement and parking are integral to the design of schemes
- The environmental impacts of traffic and infrastructure need to be considered (paragraph 102).
- Tranquil areas and the effects of noise or light pollution are a potential issue (paragraph 180).

### 3.0 SCOPE OF THE WORK

**3.1 Objective:** To create a vision for the River Colne in Colchester that celebrates its cultural heritage, enhances its environmental character and sustains appropriate economic benefits and opportunities whilst stimulating partnership working to deliver against this vision. The vision should generate a sense of continuity for the river which respects its contribution to Colchester and the surrounding area and celebrates its story in a variety of engaging ways whilst promoting initiatives to help residents live healthier lives. The consultant will be expected to facilitate a workshop event or events with local stakeholders to understand the issues and opportunities and develop a vision that all organisations can sign up to and support. A key part of this should be to explore ways of working that can enhance added value to existing partner activity through extended partnership working and a vision of active leisure that promotes community engagement and knowledge of the river as a functioning natural system.

**3.2 Outputs:** The consultant will be expected to deliver:

- An overarching vision for the river's conservation, use and value that is supported by engagement with key local stakeholders
- Separate priorities for the three main zones of the river
- Engagement with local partners through a workshop event or events
- A spatial representation of the vision that captures its ambition in a visual way
- Identification of the next steps and pathways to follow to deliver the vision and priorities

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<sup>5</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2019) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

- A summary report of findings
- Presentation of findings to the stakeholder groups

**3.3 Existing Initiatives and Plans:** In undertaking this work, the significance of relevant current or emerging strategies and plans and activities should be taken into account. This includes, but is not limited to:

- England Coast Path<sup>6</sup> – This is a new National Trail around all of England’s coast being delivered by Natural England. In places it delivers new rights to enjoy the coast within the coastal margin as well as infrastructure such as signs and gates.
- Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) – River Catchment projects<sup>7</sup>, including the Essex Water Vole Recovery Project and RIVERSEARCH training volunteer surveyors; Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve<sup>8</sup>, EWT’s first wildlife reserve and visitor centre overlooking the Colne Estuary; Living Seas project<sup>9</sup> including coastal clean-ups and shore search surveys;
- Visit Essex<sup>10</sup> The official marketing and tourism promotion agency for Essex aiming to encourage short breaks, challenge negative perceptions of the county, raise the profile of Essex as a visitor destination and create a ‘sense of place’
- Colchester Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)<sup>11</sup> – This is a borough-wide strategy that focusses on opportunities for green infrastructure improvements within Colchester borough, including the river, and introduces the Colchester Orbital, a circular recreational route around Colchester.
- Colchester Economic Strategy (2015-2021) – which aims to create a place which is vibrant, prosperous, thriving and welcoming for residents, businesses and visitors alike. Tourism is a core sector for the Borough’s economy: creating new jobs, raising and retaining skills, creating, supporting and retaining businesses.
- The Cambridge Model to estimate the Economic Impact of Tourism in Colchester Borough 2018 - this model estimates the volume of visitor trips and visitor spend in the Borough bearing in mind that there are significant visitor attractions and destinations in all four corners of the Borough as well as the town centre.
- ‘We Are Colchester’ - an emerging partnership between Colchester Council, Essex County Council, businesses and other groups, that will draw up a plan to make the best use of the borough’s historic, cultural and other assets and bid for up to £25 million from the government’s Town Deal scheme.
- The Adopted Local Plan (Focussed review 2014)<sup>12</sup> – sets the vision, objectives and spatial strategy, as well as policy, up until 2021, including major regeneration areas through which the River Colne runs.
- The Emerging Local Plan (2017-2033)<sup>13</sup> – currently at the examination stage, sets out the vision, strategy, objectives and policy for planning and delivery across the borough through to 2033. The emerging allocated sites are identified in the proposals plan.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.essexwt.org.uk/protecting-wildlife/landscape-conservation/river-catchments>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.essexwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/fingringhoe>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.essexwt.org.uk/protecting-wildlife/landscape-conservation/living-seas>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.visitessex.com/colchester.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> <https://cbccrmdata.blob.core.windows.net/noteattachment/Green%20Infrastructure%20Final%20Report%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/info/cbc-article/?catid=adopted-local-plan&id=KA-01124#adopted-neighbourhood-plans>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/info/cbc-article/?catid=emerging-local-plan&id=KA-02196>

- Wivenhoe Neighbourhood Plan<sup>14</sup> – this plan was approved at referendum in May 2019 and includes key policies relevant to the River Colne. The plan area incorporates a section of the north bank of the Lower Colne within Colchester Borough.
- Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan – ‘Made’ by Colchester Borough Council in December 2019<sup>15</sup>
- West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan – Plan ‘made’ by Colchester Borough Council in October 2019

**3.4 Stakeholders:** The Consultant shall engage with key local stakeholders to develop the vision and priorities. Key stakeholders are anticipated as follows:

- Officers from the Council and Essex County Council including planning, public and environmental health, transport, leisure, tourism, licensing and estates;
- Relevant Members; and
- External stakeholders such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Sport England, Braintree and Tendring Councils, Rural Community Council of Essex, Essex Wildlife Trust, Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, National Farmers Union, Country Landowners Association and the Brightlingsea Harbour Authority
- Community based organisations such as Colne Watch (an organisation which monitors speeding and other antisocial behaviours along the River) parish or community councils within the river corridor, and relevant water-based clubs and societies.
- Local businesses such as accommodation providers, visitor attractions, tourism bodies, business representatives and major riverside landowners.

Allowance should be made in pricing within the budget range for up to 40 stakeholder contacts to be engaged in one or more workshop sessions (venue(s) to be provided by Colchester Borough Council) but consultants should also provide a day rate for carrying out additional workshops or consultation events, to include all additional preparation, collation, reporting and expenses in case required. The Council is aware that different stakeholders of interest and place may need to be engaged using a variety of approaches and is open to proposals on varied approaches to achieve this.

**3.5 Budget:** The budget range for this project is £10-20,000 (excluding VAT but inclusive of expenses).

**3.6 Indicative timetable:**

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| • Inception                                 | 23.03.2020     |
| • Data-gathering and baseline research      | w/c 23.03.2020 |
| • Stakeholder Workshop (s)                  | w/c 20.04.2020 |
| • Draft Report                              | w/c 11.05.2020 |
| • Final Report and Stakeholder presentation | End June 2020  |

**4.0 REPORTING**

4.1 The Consultant shall work closely with the Council to ensure that agreed services are being executed and delivered to the highest standards according to critical timings and best practice. The Council will be able to supply OS base maps.

4.2 The Project Manager at the Council will be **Catherine Bailey, Planning Policy Officer**. You should nominate one person from your company to manage the brief through to completion and act as

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<sup>14</sup> <http://wivenhoeneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/info/cbc-article/?catid=neighbourhood-planning&id=KA-02895>

the primary contact. The project will be administered by email and telephone wherever practicable.

4.3 A Project Board of key officers and Members within the Council has been established and the Consultant shall allow for two meetings with the Project Manager and/or the Project Board, plus one or more initial stakeholder workshop(s) and final presentation (subject to 3.5 above), during the course of the project, with project meetings held at the Council offices provisionally at inception and draft report stages.

## **5.0 PRESENTATION OF OUTPUTS**

5.1 The Consultant shall present the outcomes of the work in the form of an A4 written technical report, along with details of the workshop findings and appendices as appropriate. Stakeholder presentations shall be in an appropriate format to be agreed with the Project Manager.

5.2 The Consultant shall make digital versions of all documents available in a format to be agreed with the Council.

## **6.0 COPYRIGHT**

6.1 The copyright of the final report and any appendices will belong to the Council which will reserve the right to distribute and publish the material in part or in whole.

## **7.0 EXPERTISE REQUIRED**

7.1 Submissions are invited from consultants who can demonstrate expertise and understanding in stakeholder engagement, recreation and tourism planning and management, development and environmental issues.

## **8.0 HOW TO RESPOND**

**8.1 Submission requirements and assessment:** In response to this brief, consultants are required to provide:

- Details of proposed approach and how they propose to comply with the project brief within the defined timescale;
- Indicative work programme, including timings for key deliverables and identified milestones;
- A fixed price quotation for undertaking the work outlined in the submission, broken down by key stages, including number of days for each named personnel (time and expenses);
- Examples of similar commissions creating environmental enhancement plans, tourism management and development, stakeholder consultation and engagement which has delivered appropriate economic benefits
- CVs of named personnel and their role in the project including details of relevant experience;
- Details of professional liability insurance;
- Contact details of two referees.

**8.2 Evaluation:** The appointment will be based on an evaluation of both quality and price (where relevant). The quality evaluation criteria will be based on:

- Experience of the team in this type of project
- Ability to facilitate and empathise with stakeholders
- Presentation skills of the team
- Enthusiasm, commitment and creativity
- Knowledge and understanding of Colchester as a borough and as a place.
- Understanding of the brief and its context
- Approach and methodology

8.3 Please confirm within your submission if there are any conflicts of interest which should be considered in relation to other current or future work being undertaken by your company.

8.4 **Submission timeline:** The indicative timetable for the award of the contract is as follows:

- Issue of quotation 21.02.2020
- Return of Quotation 06.03.2020 (by12pm)
- Appointment of consultants 13.03.2020

8.5 Shortlisted consultants will be called for interview in the week-commencing 09.03.2020. Please indicate in your submission if there are any days in that week that you are unavailable.

## 9.0 CONTACT DETAILS

9.1 Please send your email submissions to: [Catherine.bailey@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:Catherine.bailey@colchester.gov.uk)

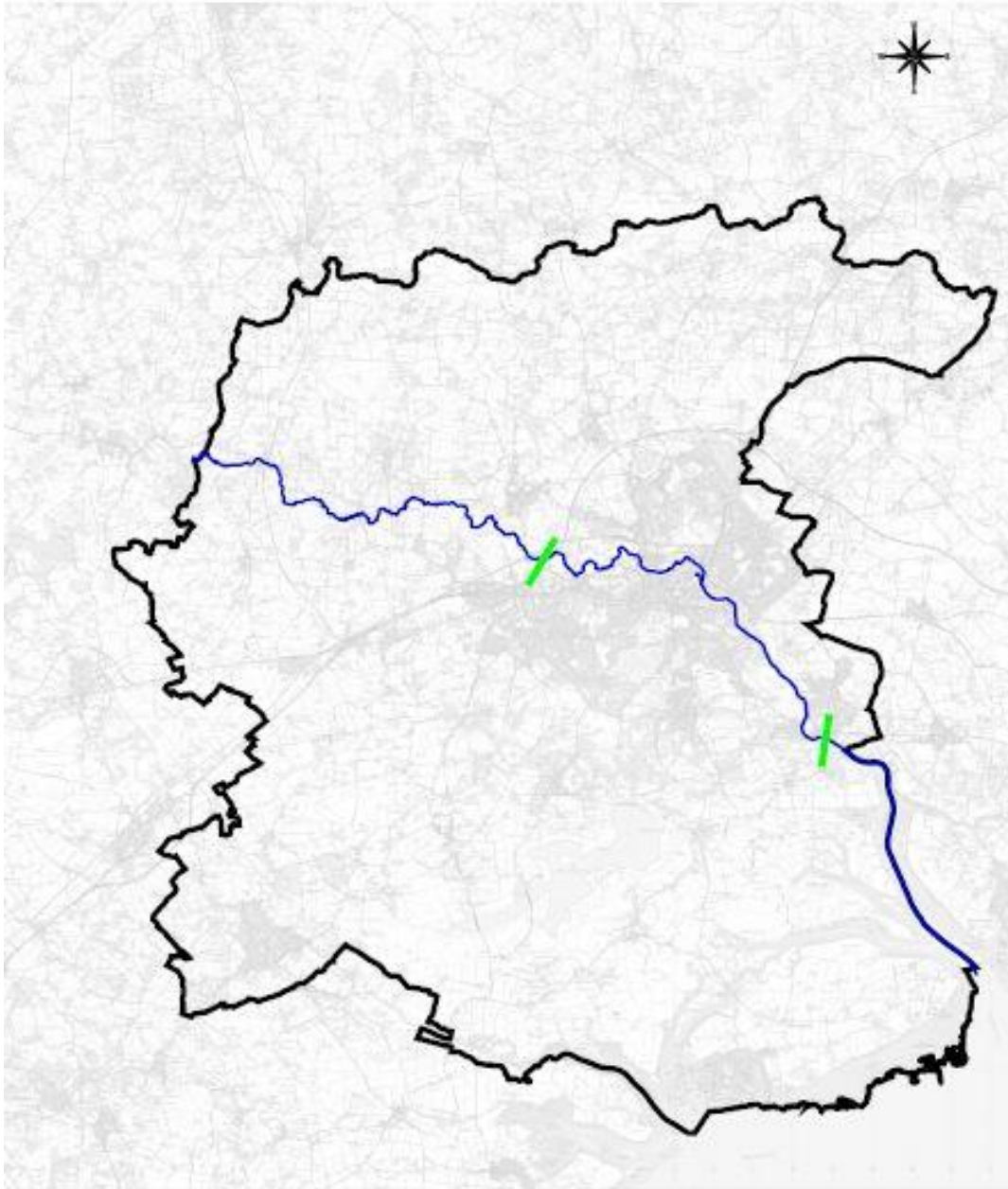
9.2 Address for information:

Catherine Bailey  
Planning Policy Officer  
Rowan House  
33 Sheepen Road  
Colchester Essex CO33WG

9.3 Further information from **Catherine Bailey, Planning Policy Officer** Tel: 01206 282530. Please note that, for reasons of fairness, we will send copies of any questions received during the quotation period and their responses to all consultants invited to submit a proposal.

**Appendix: Map of River Colne**





Date: 20/02/2020 Scale: 1:20000





## Policy and Public Initiatives Panel

Item  
**11**

17 June 2020

**Report of** Assistant Director Place and Client Services      **Author** Mandy Jones  
☎ 282501

**Title** Approach to Council and Panel's work programme 2020-21

**Wards affected** Not applicable

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out items for current Work Programme 2020-2021 for the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel, providing details of the items of business currently scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.
- 1.2 This report also sets out a suggested approach to inclusion of future topics for the work programme for 2020-2021, taking into account the effects of the current Coronavirus pandemic and ensuring alignment with the work that is taking place on the development of the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plan.
- 1.3 The Council's Recovery Programme (and other strategic priorities) have led to a number of public and partner engagement exercises being planned, or already underway. These will provide the Council with valuable insight from members of the public and partners and a future steer for the Recovery Programme. A report outlining the development of the Recovery Programme was presented to Cabinet on 3 June 2020.
- 1.4 These consultations and engagement exercises with partners, stakeholders and members of the public can provide the Panel with subject matter for the consideration of future policy and public initiatives. This will enable the Panel to align work with the Covid-19 Recovery programme and consider policy matters emerging from that programme. It is therefore suggested that the results from existing, planned and emerging consultation and engagement exercises (in addition to other methods for including items as outlined in 4.1) are used to provide topics for inclusion in the Panel's 2020-21 workplan.

### 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the Panel's Work Programme for 2020-2021 as set out below and to confirm the appropriate scheduling of work for the next municipal year.
- 2.2 The Panel is asked to approve the approach taken to generating topics for the workplan linked to the current Recovery Plan and ongoing consultations as outlined in 1.4 and section 4 below and consider these in the next meeting of this Panel.

### **3. Alternative Options**

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

### **4. Background Information**

- 4.1 The Policy and Public Initiatives Panel's Work Programme will evolve as the municipal year progresses. Items can be added to the Work Programme in two ways, either through Cabinet approving a request from the Panel, or Portfolio Holders and Cabinet requesting policies, strategies or other issues be reviewed. The Panel may also receive outline scoping reports on service reviews that are taking place across the Council and these will be added to the work programme when appropriate.
- 4.2 As the report to Cabinet of 3 June entitled 'Council Recovery Programme (Covid-19)' noted the Covid-19 crisis has had a profound effect on our communities, our economy and the Council as an organisation and once the intensity of the pandemic has passed there is widespread recognition that life may not return to what was previously considered 'normal' life. The degree of change required across the borough and in the way the Council operates as a result of Coronavirus cannot be overstated; the lives of all residents have been impacted and every service has been affected, with all officers across the Council aware of the human cost of Coronavirus.
- 4.3 With reference to the above, the development of a recovery plan is one of the major priorities for the Council as there is widespread acknowledgement that we will not have 'business as usual' in the way we understood it before Covid-19, but we will need to prepare for a 'new' or 'next' normal.
- 4.4 Work undertaken by the Council on the development of the Recovery Plan and the resulting development of policy and linked actions will need to be prioritised and balanced with the considerable financial pressures experienced by the Council as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic (see the 3 June 2020 Cabinet report of Assistant Director – Corporate and Improvement Services: Covid-19 budget changes 2020/21 and budget strategy 2021/22).
- 4.5 **The Council's Covid-19 Recovery programme**  
The Recovery Programme is organised into four main areas of work or 'cells': Economy, Community, Customers and Council. Cross-cutting themes run through all cells and will be reflected and balanced in the emerging plan. These are: Finance, Housing (including Colchester Borough Homes), Climate Change and Sustainability and the work of CCHL and the Amphora Companies.

The objectives for each cell area are outlined below with detail:

#### **Economy:**

- Colchester Borough becomes stronger post-Covid-19;
- Opportunities are developed to ensure the new economy is greener and more inclusive;
- The programme stimulates the local economy and markets;
- The Town Centre becomes a more vibrant, resilient and adaptable place for people to visit.

**Community:**

- Levels of inter-organisational collaboration and new working practices brought about by Covid-19 crisis are sustained;
- Communities are strengthened to mitigate economic disruption, reduce isolation, and improve Health and Well Being;
- Pre-existing inequalities within and between communities are reduced;
- Increase in volunteering, civic engagement and building on the strengths within Communities.

**Customer:**

- Undertake a review of all customer access channels considering Covid-19;
- Keep customers updated with the resumption of council services;
- Support customers to ease financial pressures caused by Covid-19;
- Adopt new ways of working with customers.

**Council:**

- Restart Council decision making and public participation in a digital environment;
- Restore and adapt Council services harnessing the positive changes made;
- Revise our finances to deliver a balanced budget and sustainable Medium Term Financial Forecast;
- Reset the Council's strategic priorities;
- Reimagine and reinvent our services to meet our priorities and budget.

- 4.6 Further details of the developing Covid-19 Recovery programme and the work undertaken in response to the crisis are outlined in the Cabinet report of 3 June 2020, referred to above in paragraph 4.2, and the report presented to the same Cabinet meeting entitled: 'Council Response to Coronavirus (Covid-19).'
- 4.7 Future uncertainty and frequent changes in predictions caused by the Coronavirus pandemic means work planning and future policy development will need to be agile and flexible to accommodate and respond to these changes. Likewise, consultation exercises linked to future development of policy and action plans will need to follow this model of agility and flexibility.
- 4.8 As part of the development of the Recovery Plan, a separate Communications and Engagement Plan will be put in place and ensure consultation with partners, stakeholders and members of the public is properly built into the Recovery planning process.
- 4.9 The crisis has led to an increased focus on partnership working and a consequent emphasis on sharing citizen insight and joint ownership. This insight can be utilised alongside our own public and targeted consultation and engagement exercises for the development of policy and public initiatives linked to recovery from Coronavirus.
- 4.10 A number of consultation exercises are being undertaken or by the Council and partners which will inform the Recovery programme and can be used to develop the Panel's workplan. Some examples of this are outlined below. This is by no means an exhaustive list with more exercises likely to be undertaken to provide information for potential topics for the Panel's to consider including in their workplan.

- **State of Life Survey** Active Essex / University of Essex have teamed up with State of Life to find out how the current situation with coronavirus makes people feel about work, health, money, other people, and life in general <https://bit.ly/StateOfLife>
- **Colchester Borough Council Covid-19 Business Survey (closed):** This survey was undertaken to gauge to effects of the Coronavirus on businesses in the borough and levels of support they had access to and may need to inform the Economy cell of the Covid-19 Recovery programme.
- **Overcoming Barriers to Health and Wellbeing: Community Assets in North East Essex.** This major piece of qualitative research undertaken by Anglia Ruskin University on behalf of CBC and the Health Alliance looks at the role community assets play in enabling wellbeing. The research was extended to look at "life under lockdown" for community members across North East Essex.
- **Town Deal:** Work has been restarted on the Town Deal linking it to the Recovery Programme, and detailed community, partner and stakeholder engagement will be undertaken as part of the development of the Town Investment Plan.

4.11 The development, prioritisation, governance and oversight of the Recovery plan will be directed at portfolio holder level with major decisions brought to Cabinet. However, the recovery work and consultations will identify policy areas for this Panel to consider as part of its future work programme. The Panel could consider using the results of the above consultation exercises and future engagement alongside policy considerations emerging from the Recovery Programme for inclusion in the Panel's work programme. It is suggested that consideration is given to those policy areas for the workplan at the next meeting of this Panel.

## 5. Standard References

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

## 6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 Policy review is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing.

## 7. Environment and Sustainability Implications

7.1 Environmental and sustainability considerations are considered of paramount importance in the Recovery Programme and any work or policies emerging from it.

7.2 There is a specific 'Climate Change and Sustainability' cross-cutting work stream running through all the cells. Each policy area considered by the Panel will need to be considered in relation to the Climate Emergency Action Plan to ensure that the Council's climate change, environmental and sustainability ambitions and policies are actively addressed and promoted throughout the development of the Recovery Plan and any proposed policies brought forward in the future.

## Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Work Programme 2020-21

<b>17 June 2020</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Update on Panel recommendations from 2019-20</li><li>2. Approach to Council and Panel's work programme 2020-21</li></ol>
<b>5 August 2020</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Reduction of anti-social use of fireworks within the Borough</li><li>2. Consultation exercises – Responses and policy area suggestions.</li></ol>
<b>23 September 2020</b>
<b>25 November 2020</b>
<b>13 January 2021</b>
<b>3 March 2021</b>

Requests awaiting consideration by Cabinet:

- None currently outstanding.

