



Cabinet

21 November 2018

Item
7(i)

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Ann Hedges ☎ 282202
Title	Strategic Plan Spending Priorities		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 A new Strategic Plan was agreed at full Council in February 2018. In order to progress the priorities it was agreed at Cabinet 11 July 2018 that additional, previously unallocated funds would be allocated across a range of key themes embedded in the Plan to enable quicker delivery. The themes also highlight areas where funding has already been secured but need additional focus.
- 1.2 Eight themes were identified and are set out in more detail at section 5 below. The eight themes are:
1. Create Transport for Colchester
 2. Clean up and Promote the Town Centre
 3. Fight Crime and Improve Community Safety
 4. Reduce Homelessness
 5. Enterprising Colchester
 6. Sports and Health for All
 7. Reform and Refresh
 8. Co-operation
- 1.3 Since July the programme of work has progressed and this paper updates the specific projects being delivered against each theme.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note progress and further detail against the eight priority themes.
- 2.2 To agree the amended funding allocations set out in section 10.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 These priorities reflect those set out in the Strategic Plan and the allocation of resources will enable them to be moved forward more quickly.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 A different set of actions could be agreed however it is felt that these are of the highest importance.
- 4.2 No additional actions could be instigated however there is a significant amount of one-off money available that should be put to use for the benefit of Colchester.

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5. Background Information

- 5.1 The year-end financial position that was taken to Scrutiny Panel on 12 June 2018 showed a positive position with a number of funding streams available for one-off spending.
- 5.2 A number of priorities have been identified that reflect the Strategic Plan that could be progressed more quickly with additional funding and themes that needed added focus is maintained.
- 5.3 Further progress and detail of the themes has been developed since the report to cabinet in July.

5.3.1 Create 'Transport for Colchester'

This was described as working with Essex County Council and public transport providers to agree a transport plan to secure better public transport and roads, to get back the power for Colchester to fix potholes, poor paths and broken roads.

A number of positive actions have been taken:

- a) Contribution of an additional £100k to the Local Highways Panel (LHP) agreed and the LHP has been moved back to Colchester.
- b) Working with Essex County Council on a Strategic Plan for Transport. Work has started and consultation will be undertaken in the New Year.
- c) Ongoing discussions with Essex County Council about how our highways are managed.

5.3.2 Clean up and promote the Town Centre

This was described as making the most of our great town, light up and show off our heritage. Promote the Business Improvement District (BID) and prioritise Vineyard Gate. Making Colchester a cleaner, greener, better experience for pedestrians, visitors and residents.

A range of activities have been undertaken with others at the planning stage:

- a) Deep cleans of the Town Centre undertaken.
- b) Additional street cleaning equipment being purchased. We are looking at equipment and testing various things to establish what will be most effective.
- c) Recycling bins to be installed once licenses agreed by Essex County Council and additional litter bins.
- d) Pedestrianisation of the High Street being looked at by the Public Initiatives and Policy Panel and the Business Improvement District.
- e) Introduction of Living Walls being scoped to help improve air quality.
- f) Scoping sites for the introduction of drinking fountains across the Town Centre. A plan for five sites being developed. Implementation likely to be early summer 2019.
- g) Christmas trees being planned for six sites across the Town Centre.
- h) Scoping and feasibility study to look at costs and options for highlighting a number of heritage assets. This is a complex project that will require permissions from Historic England and it is likely to be early summer before it is delivered. However, a number of activities have been delivered such as the poppies display on the Castle for remembrance weekend and the lighting of the war memorial.
- i) A new marketing campaign at Liverpool Street Station that has proved successful in the past that will be delivered in the run up to Christmas.

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- j) An innovative art installation in Sir Isaacs Walk with high level “umbrellas” that are lit. It is planned that these will go up in February.
- k) Additional planters for the High Street for Spring.

5.3.3 Fight Crime and Improve Community Safety

This was described as working with the police to put more officers on our streets, strengthening community policing and making them more visible and responsive to resident’s needs. We will be tough on anti-social behaviour.

Discussions were held with the police to identify how additional resource might be best used and have resulted in a robust and comprehensive plan.

- a) Additional policing resource being funded made up of 1 sergeant, 4 special constables, 1 constable and 1 PCSO. This will further increase by March 2019 to have 1 sergeant, 1 constable, 3 PCSOs, 4 special constables and an ASB co-ordinator.
- b) Town Centre Action Plan has been agreed with the Police targeting persistent begging, street drinking, anti-social behaviour and drug use/selling. Implementation has begun.
- c) Weekly partner meetings are held to monitor actions and outcomes.

In addition we have undertaken actions to further supplement this work including:

- d) Use of a specialist external company to undertake enforcement action particularly targeting night time low level ASB. These have started and will continue for six months, targeting two weekends per month.
- e) Use of an external company to provide additional resource for a week of zero tolerance in the day time.
- f) A series of enforcement campaigns being planned including gum, litter and fly tipping over a year using existing resource in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy. The first of these will be around gum.

5.3.4 Reduce Homelessness

Described as additional investment in property in the Borough to help house vulnerable residents and produce extra income to re-invest. **Build new Council houses**, to help those on our waiting lists or those immediately at risk of homelessness.

- a) MHCLG funding of £192k in place and plan being delivered to reduce rough sleeping.
- b) Purchase of 16 properties agreed by Cabinet for use as temporary accommodation. At this point eight have been purchased and four have been let to homeless families.
- c) Cabinet also agreed to purchase ten properties under right to buy back for permanent accommodation. Four have been purchased and a further three are being purchased.
- d) HRA Borrowing headroom – bids submitted to access funding for additional headroom.
- e) Paper agreed at Cabinet 10 October to enable Amphora Homes to build housing including affordable housing.
- f) This agenda also sees a paper proposing that up to twenty properties will be bought for affordable rent in partnership, to allow use of Right to Buy receipts.

5.3.5 Enterprising Colchester

Described as supporting our innovative local businesses, large and small. Develop our creative industries and our partnership with business leaders and the University of Essex.

One of the priority actions we are able to take is to look for opportunities for external funding to support businesses in Colchester. This is demonstrated in the key actions under this theme:

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- a) Business Improvement District established and working on their priorities.
- b) Bid for funding to enable roll out of ultrafast broadband for small businesses submitted.
- c) Bid to Local Growth fund for funding for new grow on spaces for local businesses.

5.3.6 Sports and Health for All

Described as taking the next steps towards building Northern Gateway as a Regional Sports and Entertainment Hub, working with Sports England and others to raise sports participation across the Borough.

- a) Publication of the first phase of the project is about to be published. By the end of November we will have clarification from Sport England on the delivery phase funding that we expect to be in the region of £3m across the 3 areas (Tendring, Basildon and Colchester).
- b) First phase saw £850K development grant invested, setting up the infrastructure to run the main projects. This also started to test some initial existing projects that were felt to be good practise and to explore if these should be scaled and replicated.
- c) For example a Housing Crisis project for people in temporary and emergency accommodation given intensive support, including debt management, involvement in the community, mental health, physical activity, supported by a personal mentor approach. This has proved very successful.
- d) Chair of Sport England attended the first strategic sponsors group.

5.3.7 Reform and Refresh

Described as invigorating Council ways of working, to look at alternative methods of service delivery and to maximise efficiencies to be re-directed towards frontline services. Launch a Policy and Public Initiatives panel to bring in new ideas from the public.

The new Public Policy and Initiatives Panel was established at the beginning of the Municipal year and has met a number of times. It has held a consultation meeting and an on-line survey to look at ideas from the public. A number of these are being taken forward.

The Task & Finish Group to look at alternative methods of service delivery now has a full membership and will meet shortly.

5.3.8 Co-operation

Described as welcoming the help and ideas and support of every party and every part of the community, working with Tollgate Village, forming a cross-party group for tourism and heritage, working with all of those wanting to improve life and prospects for all within the Borough.

Key actions here include:

- a) Task & Finish Group looking at opportunities to improve our tourism and heritage offer, Chaired by Cllr Laws.
- b) Tollgate representative invited to join the Ambassadors group.
- c) Funding for community initiatives including support to Age Concern.
- d) Funding for the Arts Centre to enable a bid to the Arts Council for refurbishment work. Our funding of £30k has successfully supported the bid for additional funding of almost £500k.
- e) Working with the voluntary group "Walk Colchester" to progress the next stage of the Colchester Orbital.
- f) A one-off payment to support West Mersea Town Council with refurbishment of the toilets.

Appendix A

- g) WW1 commemorative benches in Castle Park installed.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 An equality impact assessment was available for the Strategic Plan and is relevant for this. The link is available here [Strategic Plan 2018-21](#)

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The priorities are all set out in the [Strategic Plan 2018-21](#). This programme of work will take forward a number of areas.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 A number of these priorities will require public consultation and finance for appropriate consultation will be included in the allocation of resources to inform how specific projects will be taken forward.
- 8.2 The work of the Public Policy and Initiatives Panel in particular has asked the public for ideas and a range of these are now being taken forward.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There will be a range of areas that will of interest to the public and proactive communications will be undertaken and a range of communication campaigns will be used to support some of the behaviour change activities.
- 9.2 Better Colchester has been established as a brand to inform and engage people of the actions being taken and how they can get involved. A range of activities are underway including adverts in the Gazette, Spotify adverts, Facebook boosts, short videos, bus stop adverts. The aim is to get key messages to the public to explain what we are doing to improve the issues they tell us they have about the borough.
- 9.3 Two editions of a Council newsletter planned. The first will be delivered week commencing 19 November.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 Cabinet agreed a one off additional budget allocation of £1.95m to support the Strategic Plan spending priorities. This funding was agreed in addition to existing revenue and capital budget allocations. The initial sums were allocated to themes pending more detailed planning. Allocations would need to change as estimates and partner views were confirmed to allocate resource to specific projects to ensure best value. As such it was always envisaged that some reallocations would be required.
- 10.2 The following table sets out the latest position by theme providing details of specific budgetary allocations. This shows that over £1.5m has been allocated against specific activities.

Main theme	Items to be funded	Initial Allocation	Current agreed budgets
		£'000	£'000
	Local Highways Panel		100

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Main theme	Items to be funded	Initial Allocation	Current agreed budgets
		£'000	£'000
Transport for Colchester	Support to development of Transport Strategy and work on pedestrianisation of the High Street, including consultation.		117
		550	217
Clean up the Town Centre	<i>Additional cleanliness activities:-</i>		
	• Deep cleans of the High Street and Town Centre Roads		25
	• Removal of high level graffiti		3
	• Additional equipment		33
	• Additional zone resource		102
	• Recycling bins		20
	• Additional litter bins		6
		300	189
	<i>Heritage projects including lighting</i>	200	200
	Tourism marketing campaign		10
	<i>Projects including:-;</i>		
	• Christmas trees		40
	• Living walls		30
	• Drinking Fountains		18
	• Signage		3
• Umbrella art installation		30	
• Additional planters		30	
• Project resource to support delivery		20	
	250	181	
Fight Crime	Additional resource to the police (including street weeks)		330
	<i>Enforcement campaigns:-</i>		
	• 12 night time zero tolerance exercises & 1 week of day time actions		60
	• Enforcement campaigns		30
	400	420	
Co-operation	Community projects		70
	<i>Specific Projects:-</i>		
	• Joint projects with voluntary and arts sectors		10
	• Support to Colchester Arts Centre for bid.		30
	• Support to Age Concern		5
	• Colchester Orbital		20
	• West Mersea toilets		15
	• WW1 commemorative benches		4
	150	154	
Communications	Better Colchester campaign		100
	Newsletters - 2 editions		50

Appendix A

Main theme	Items to be funded	Initial Allocation	Current agreed budgets
		£'000	£'000
		100	150
		1,950	1,511
Contingency	Contingency to cover additional projects, and or costing changes or emerging costs		439
			1,950

- 10.3 The agreed detailed allocations will not all be spent within this financial year, for example, the support for additional police resources covers a 2 year period. This is as expected. It was recognised delivery would extend beyond the first year, to allow for feasibility study and or commercial process and for discussions with partners, such as Essex County Council and the Police. £1.5M of spend or commitment is expected by the end of year one. Any unspent sums this year will be carried forward to the following year and reported within normal budget reports.
- 10.4 As shown, there remains a sum of £0.4m to be allocated to specific projects or activities. This will include consideration of any ongoing costs.
- 11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications**
- 11.1 A number of the priorities will improve the health, wellbeing and community safety for our residents.
- 12. Health and Safety Implications**
- 12.1 N/A
- 13. Risk Management Implications**
- 13.1 N/A