

Governance and Audit Committee Meeting

**Online Meeting, Virtual Meeting Platform
Tuesday, 20 October 2020 at 18:00**

The Governance and Audit Committee considers and approves the Council's Statement of Accounts and reviews the Council's annual audit letter. The Committee also deals with the Council's governance, risk management and audit arrangements. To make recommendations to the Council on functions such as Elections and bye laws, and determine Community Governance Reviews.

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

You have the right of access to all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Cabinet which may be conducted remotely 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 published on the Council's website at least 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 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: Governance and Audit 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
www.colchester.gov.uk

Governance and Audit Committee - Terms of Reference (but not limited to)

Accounts and Audit

To consider and approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and the Council's financial accounts, and review the Council's external auditor's annual audit letter.

Governance

To consider the findings of the annual review of governance including the effectiveness of the system of internal audit and approve the signing of the Annual Governance Statement.

To have an overview of the Council's control arrangements including risk management and in particular with regard to the annual audit plan and work programme, and to approve the policies contained in the Council's Ethical Governance Framework.

Other regulatory matters

To make recommendations to Council on functions such as elections, the name and status of areas and individuals, and byelaws.

To determine and approve Community Governance Reviews.

Standards in relation to Member Conduct

To consider reports from the Monitoring Officer on the effectiveness of the Members' Code of Conduct, and to advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Code.

To receive referrals from the Monitoring Officer into allegations of misconduct and to create a Hearings Sub-Committee to hear and determine complaints about Members and Co-opted Members referred to it by the Monitoring Officer.

To conduct hearings on behalf of the Parish and Town Councils and to make recommendation to Parish and Town Councils on improving standards or actions following a finding of a failure by a Parish or Town Councillor.

To inform Council and the Chief Executive of relevant issues arising from the determination of Code of Conduct complaints.

To grant dispensations, and to hear and determine appeals against refusal to grant dispensations by the Monitoring Officer.

To make recommendations to Council regarding the appointment of Independent Persons.

General

To review of the Constitution including governance issues around formal meetings, processes and member training and to make recommendations to Council.

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
Governance and Audit Committee
Tuesday, 20 October 2020 at 18:00

The Governance and Audit Committee Members are:

Councillor Chris Pearson
Councillor Sam McCarthy
Councillor Nick Barlow
Councillor Paul Dundas
Councillor Mark Goacher
Councillor Dennis Willetts
Councillor Barbara Wood

Chairman
Deputy Chairman

The Governance and Audit Committee Substitute Members are:

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

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

Please note that Agenda items 1 to 6 are normally dealt with briefly.

1 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.

2 Substitutions

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

3 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.

4 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.

5 Have Your Say! (Virtual Meetings)

Members of the public may make representations to the meeting. Each representation may be no longer than three minutes (500 words). Members of the public may register their wish to address the meeting by registering online by 12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting date. In addition a written copy of the representation will need to be supplied for use in the event of unforeseen technical difficulties preventing participation at the meeting itself.

6 Minutes of Previous Meeting

No minutes are presented to this meeting.

7 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review Letter 2019/2020 7 - 14

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman produces an Annual Review Letter on the number of complaints it has received regarding each local authority. This report provides details of Colchester Borough Council's Annual Review Letter for 2019/2020.

8 Health and Safety Report 2019/20 15 - 58

The Committee will consider a report detailing Colchester Borough Council's general duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and specific duties under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to ensure that employees, and others who may be affected, can work safely without risk to their safety or health.

9 Review of Remote (Digital) Council Meetings 59 - 108

The Committee will consider a report detailing a review of the implementation of remote committee meetings, which were required as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. An initial report was considered by the Committee on 28 July 2020, and following this Councillors, officers and members of the public were asked to provide their views to help inform the review of remote meetings and formulate recommendations how future meetings should be conducted.

10 Work Programme 2020-2021 109 - 112

The Committee will be asked to note the contents of the Work Programme for 2020-2021.

11 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)

20 October 2020

Report of	Monitoring Officer	Author	Andrew Weavers
			☎ 282213
Title	Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review Letter 2019/2020		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman produces an Annual Review Letter on the number of complaints it has received regarding each local authority. This report provides details of Colchester Borough Council's Annual Review Letter for 2019/2020.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the contents of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter for 2019/2020.

3. Reasons for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To inform the Cabinet of the contents of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter relating to Colchester Borough Council for 2019/2020.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 No alternative options are presented.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman issues an Annual Review Letter to each local authority. The Annual Review Letter for Colchester for the year ending 31 March 2020 is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 4.3 It is worth noting that anyone can choose to make a complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. Accordingly, the number of complaints is not an indicator of performance or level of customer service. In most instances there was no case to answer. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman will normally insist that the Council has the opportunity to resolve the complaint locally through its own complaints procedure before commencing its own investigation.
- 4.4 The Cabinet considered and approved this report at its meeting on 2 September 2020.

5. Key Headlines

- 5.1 No public interest reports were issued. One service improvement recommendation was agreed and completed.

- 5.2 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman has changed its emphasis this year in its Annual Review Letter to focus on the outcomes of complaints and what can be learned from them. The statistics are on 3 key areas:

(i) Complaints upheld - The Ombudsman upholds complaints when it finds some form of fault in an authority's actions, including where the authority accepted fault before it investigated. A focus on how often things go wrong, rather than simple volumes of complaints provides a clearer indicator of performance.

(ii) Compliance with recommendations - The Ombudsman recommends ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice. Its recommendations try to put people back in the position they were before the fault and the Ombudsman monitors authorities to ensure they comply with its recommendations. Failure to comply with its recommendations is rare. An authority with a compliance rate below 100% is recommended by the Ombudsman to scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning. (Colchester's compliance rate was 100%).

(iii) Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority - The Ombudsman wants to encourage the early resolution of complaints and to credit authorities that have a positive and open approach to resolving complaints. It recognises cases where an authority has taken steps to put things right before the complaint was received by the Ombudsman. The authority upheld the complaint and the Ombudsman agreed with how it offered to put things right.

The Ombudsman compares the three key annual statistics for each authority with similar types of authorities to work out an average level of performance.

- 5.3 The following table provides a comparison of complaints and enquires received.

Year	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and other services	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
2019/20	3	1	5	3	6	2	0	20
2018/19	0	1	4	0	5	10	0	20
2017/18	1	1	5	2	8	3	1	21
2016/17	2	0	2	0	5	7	0	16
2015/16	3	2	3	2	6	8	0	25

- 5.4 The following table provides a comparison of decisions made.

Year	Incomplete or Invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for Local Resolution	Closed after Initial Enquiries	Detailed Investigations			Total
					Not Upheld	Upheld	Uphold Rate	
2019/20	2	0	9	6	3	1	25%	21
2018/19	2	1	4	10	3	3	50%	23
2017/18	1	2	8	5	4	1	20%	21
2016/17	0	1	4	5	2	1	33%	13
2015/16	2	3	12	4	1	1	50%	23

As can be seen from the table above, 4 detailed investigations were undertaken. Of which:

- 3 not upheld,
- 1 upheld.

(The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman decided that the Council had been at fault in how it acted, and the fault may or may not have caused injustice to the complainant, or where the Council accepted that it needed to remedy the complaint before the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman made a finding on fault. If the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman decided there was fault and it caused an injustice to the complainant, usually it will have recommended the Council take some action to address it).

The uphold rate of 25% is lower than the average of 45% in similar Authorities.

- 5.5 The upheld case was under the Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation heading and was in relation to a complaint that the Council had failed to properly investigate a complaint of a statutory nuisance caused by burning waste on a neighbouring property. The complainant also complained that the Council had poorly managed the complaint process. The Ombudsman found that there was no fault in how the Council investigated the matter. However, there was some fault in how it had communicated with the complainant. The Ombudsman found that the Council had given the complainant wrong advice and had not communicated the outcome of a site visit. The Council agreed to apologise to the complainant and remind staff of the law relating to waste management and the need to keep complainants informed during statutory nuisance investigations. The Council subsequently undertook these actions to the Ombudsman's satisfaction.
- 5.6 In 2019/2020 the Council received 210,377 direct customer contacts in the customer services area (calls and in person visits to the Hub). This is a slight increase from the previous year's figure of 210,185. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman in the same period received 20 complaints and enquires in relation to how the Council had dealt with its customers. The number of complaints remained the same as the previous year.
- 5.7 The following table shows Colchester's performance compared with other Borough and District Councils in Essex.

Name	Complaints Upheld % (numbers)	Compliance with recommendations	Satisfactory remedies provided by Council
Basildon	50% (2)	100%	0%
Braintree	40% (2)	100%	50%
Brentwood	25% (1)	100%	0%
Castle Point	25% (1)	100%	0%
Chelmsford	0% (0)	n/a	n/a
Colchester	25% (1)	100%	0%
Epping Forest	67% (10)	100%	20%
Harlow	0% (0)	n/a	n/a
Maldon	100% (1)	100%	0%
Rochford	100% (1)	100%	0%
Tendring	83% (5)	100%	0%
Uttlesford	100% (2)	100%	0%

- 5.8 The Contact & Support team in Customer are delighted to have been awarded the Customer Service Excellence standard for the second year in a row, following a rigorous assessment day in January 2020. Customer Service Excellence is a government-backed

industry standard that tests in depth those areas that research has shown are a priority to customers, with a particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude.

- 5.9 Each quarter residents are invited to complete a survey to determine levels of satisfaction after accessing services via our contact and support centre. A standard set of 5 questions are posed to gauge levels of customer satisfaction. For 2019/20 the following outcomes were achieved:

Question	% of positive responses
Do you feel we answered your call in a reasonable time?	91%
Did you get everything you needed from the call?	89%
Did you feel the person you spoke to was professional and polite?	95%
Were you satisfied with the service you received today?	92%
Do you feel that you were treated fairly today?	94%
(N.B. These results cover the surveys held for all services for the dates of: June 2019, September 2019, December 2019 and March 2020)	

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The lessons learnt from complaints to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman link in with our Strategic Plan aims to be efficient accessible, customer focused and always looking to improve. Having an effective complaints process helps us to achieve the Strategic Plan's themes of a Wellbeing, making Colchester an even better place to live and supporting those who need help most.

7. Publicity Considerations

- 7.1 Details of the Annual Review Letter are published on the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's website and will also be published on the Council's website.

8. Financial, Equality, Diversity and Human Rights , Consultation, Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 No direct implications.

Appendix 1 – Annual Review Letter 2019/20

22 July 2020

By email

Mr Pritchard
Chief Executive
Colchester Borough Council

Dear Mr Pritchard

Annual Review letter 2020

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about your authority for the year ending 31 March 2020. Given the exceptional pressures under which local authorities have been working over recent months, I thought carefully about whether it was still appropriate to send you this annual update. However, now, more than ever, I believe that it is essential that the public experience of local services is at the heart of our thinking. So, I hope that this feedback, which provides unique insight into the lived experience of your Council's services, will be useful as you continue to deal with the current situation and plan for the future.

Complaint statistics

This year, we continue to place our focus on the outcomes of complaints and what can be learned from them. We want to provide you with the most insightful information we can and have made several changes over recent years to improve the data we capture and report. We focus our statistics on these three key areas:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find some form of fault in an authority's actions, including where the authority accepted fault before we investigated. A focus on how often things go wrong, rather than simple volumes of complaints provides a clearer indicator of performance.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice. Our recommendations try to put people back in the position they were before the fault and we monitor authorities to ensure they comply with our recommendations. Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An authority with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority - We want to encourage the early resolution of complaints and to credit authorities that have a positive and open approach to

resolving complaints. We recognise cases where an authority has taken steps to put things right before the complaint came to us. The authority upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your authority with similar types of authorities to work out an average level of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

This data will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), along with a copy of this letter on 29 July 2020, and our Review of Local Government Complaints. For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our [website](#).

Resources to help you get it right

There are a range of resources available that can support you to place the learning from complaints, about your authority and others, at the heart of your system of corporate governance. [Your council's performance](#) launched last year and puts our data and information about councils in one place. Again, the emphasis is on learning, not numbers. You can find the decisions we have made, public reports we have issued, and the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

I would encourage you to share the tool with colleagues and elected members; the information can provide valuable insights into service areas, early warning signs of problems and is a key source of information for governance, audit, risk and scrutiny functions.

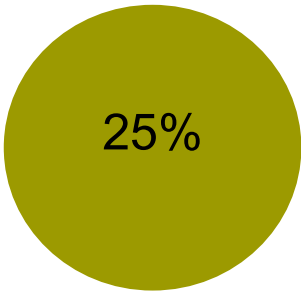
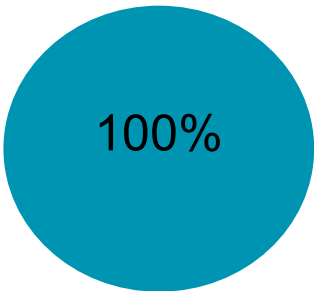
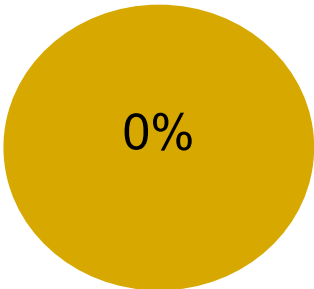
Earlier this year, we held our link officer seminars in London, Bristol, Leeds and Birmingham. Attended by 178 delegates from 143 local authorities, we focused on maximising the impact of complaints, making sure the right person is involved with complaints at the right time, and how to overcome common challenges.

We have a well-established and successful training programme supporting local authorities and independent care providers to help improve local complaint handling. During the year, we delivered 118 courses, training more than 1,400 people. This is 47 more courses than we delivered last year and included more training to adult social care providers than ever before. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Yours sincerely,



Michael King
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaints upheld		
	<p>25% of complaints we investigated were upheld.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 45% in similar authorities.</p>	<p>1 upheld decision</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 4 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020</p>
Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations		
	<p>In 100% of cases we were satisfied the authority had successfully implemented our recommendations.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 99% in similar authorities.</p>	<p>Statistics are based on a total of 1 compliance outcome for the period between 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An authority with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning. 		
Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority		
	<p>In 0% of upheld cases we found the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 20% in similar authorities.</p>	<p>0 satisfactory remedy decisions</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 4 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020</p>

20 October 2020

Report of	Assistant Director of Policy and Corporate	Author	Carl Free
Title	Health and Safety Report 2019/20		☎ 506579
Wards affected	N/A		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Colchester Borough Council has general duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and specific duties under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to ensure that employees, and others who may be affected, can work safely without risk to their safety or health.
- 1.2 Overall responsibility for Health and Safety rests with Cabinet but is overseen by the Chief Operating Officer and managed by the Corporate Health and Safety Officer and Designated Officers within services, who form the Health and Safety Committee.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the Health and Safety report for 2019/20 and approval of the Health and Safety Policy for 2020/21.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Leader of the Council has the ultimate responsibility for the management and monitoring of health and safety provision across all the Council's undertakings. Cabinet are jointly and severally the primary duty holders for health and safety across the Council's undertakings.
- 3.2 The Health and Safety Policy is an integral part of the risk management process, which forms part of the policy framework. As such it is appropriate to provide an annual report on Health and Safety to the Governance and Audit Committee, to assist with the Committee's responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of risk management.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The Health and Safety policy sets out the Council's commitment to managing health and safety risks, organisation structure and the individual responsibilities, at all levels of the organisation. The only changes to the policy in 2020 are updates the Organisation Structure to make it accurate to the latest structure.
- 4.2 The policy (appendix A) is supported by a set of arrangements (appendix B) that detail what the Council will do in practice to achieve the aims set out in the health and safety policy and successfully manage health and safety.

5. Summary of Policy outcomes during 2019/20

- 5.1 Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, significant changes in ways of working and priority of ensuring staff, customer and member of public safety during this time, some regular health and safety scheduled tasks and other non-critical work for 2020 was paused in order to provide Covid-19 focused health and safety support to the Council.

As reported last year, the audits and reviews in progress at the time had longer terms action plans being worked towards, which has continued during the pandemic, but were not able to be fully completed due to the shift in priority of work. Necessary improvements to serious risks or breaches were actioned without delay as usual practice, and where possible 'easy win' immediate actions. A full review of these audit and review action plans will be completed in 2021 to ensure no learning points are missed, and the outstanding actions are completed.

- 5.2 During the pandemic, the Corporate Health and Safety Officer prioritised supporting and providing advice to the Council widely and specific services on Coronavirus matters, this included:

- Producing or updating health and safety documentation, templates and guidance based on latest Covid-19 information and research from the Government or other official sources, or due to urgent new demands and significant changes in ways of working
- Providing updates to the CBC Covid operational and strategic groups
- Delivering health and safety training to redeployed staff
- Managing the procurement and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand sanitiser to all teams and CBC corporate sites, including protective screens
- Implementing the changes necessary to make Rowan House Covid-secure for safe staff return to the office and assisted with preparing the reopening of CBC staff and customer sites, such as Leisure World, Town Hall and Castle Museum.

- 5.3 The "Skyguard MySOS" personal monitoring device remains in place as the corporate approach to supporting lone workers, with around 50 shared devices in use by CBC lone workers. No emergency alarms were activated during the 2019/20 period covered by this report.

A successful trial of the Skyguard smartphone app, which works in the same way as the devices, was recently completed within several teams. Staff preferred the app over the devices, and work is in progress to transfer lone workers over from the shared devices to the smartphone app system. This maintains lone worker safety, while reducing the costs to the Council and risk of spreading coronavirus through shared devices.

- 5.4 The internal audit of health and safety at Colchester Borough Council provided an opinion of "Reasonable Assurance" in 2020. The main recommendations made were regarding missing record of regular H&S inspections at CBC sites and delays of incident and investigation reporting by managers. Details of actions already taken to resolve these main recommendations are as below:

The inspections record keeping process has been updated to give managers more time for completion, and ensure missed records are monitored and obtained utilising the Business Support officer who was new in post and has now been trained.

An updated Health and Safety incident report form is in its final draft stages, and due to be released in the next few months bringing numerous improvements and using the

latest ICT systems, this will help ensure timely incident and investigation reports are submitted as per audit recommendation.

- 5.5 Fire Risk Assessments for all corporate buildings (primarily used as CBC staff workplaces) are due to be completed in October and November. Previous reports had no findings or recommendations identified at a high-risk rating.
- 5.6 Corporate Health and Safety face to face training has been limited during the pandemic. However, the health and safety induction course was converted to a eLearning package at the beginning of the year so new starters have continued to receive this training.

First Aid training was able to be delivered in a Covid-secure way and first aiders were able to maintain their certification to ensure first aid provision on numerous CBC sites.

Practical Manual Handling training was delivered to all the Neighbourhood Services Waste & Recycling collection staff, and to the staff redeployed to the service at the beginning of the pandemic.

- 5.7 There has been a continued positive low number of incidents involving serious injuries to staff or members of public taken to hospital for treatment, which are notifiable to the Health and Safety Executive often referred as “RIDDOR incidents”. Since the previous report there has been 2 RIDDOR incidents (staff fractured ankle from a slip/trip, and member of public taken to hospital for treatment following an asthma attack), previously 2, 4 and 7 in 2019, 18 and 17 respectively.

Near miss reporting continues to be encouraged and promoted, and actively reported by staff and managers, helping resolve any concerns or issues before they become a potential incident and/or injury.

- 5.8 People & Performance and Corporate Health and Safety, with the Live Well / Work Well (Wellbeing) Group, continue to work together on Stress Management and Mental Health, which is included as a priority in the updated People Strategy. Staff will be surveyed on their wellbeing and stress indicators to help us identify the sources of work-related stress within the organisation, so resources can be focused to help eliminate or reduce the main factors of stress, reduce sickness absence and improve staff wellbeing.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) [link](#)

7. Standard References

- 7.1 There are no particular references to publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

8. Strategic Plan References

- 8.1 The failure to adequately identify and manage health and safety issues will affect the ability of the Council to achieve its strategic objectives.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 Details of consultation is included in Document Information section of the policy.

10. Publicity Considerations

10.1 None

11. Financial implications

11.1 None

12. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

12.1 None

13. Health and Safety Implications

13.1 The failure to adequately identify and manage health and safety issues may have an effect on the ability of the Council to deliver effective services.

14. Risk Management Implications

14.1 The failure to adequately identify and manage health and safety issues may have an effect on the ability of the Council to deliver effective services.

15. Appendices

15.1 Appendix A: Health and Safety Policy 2020/21

15.2 Appendix B: Health and Safety Arrangements



Health and Safety Policy 2020/21

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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out our commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of those working for Colchester Borough Council and anyone else who interacts with the services that we provide.

As an employer, we are aware of our general duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and our specific duties under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Where additional legislation relates to the activities that we are carrying out we will also ensure that our duties are fulfilled and our employees and others who may be affected can work safely without risk to their safety or health.

We will monitor and review this policy and associated documentation as necessary, at least every three years, unless any significant changes occur in the meantime.

“Colchester Borough Council is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees, customers and anyone who interacts with our services. We strive to create an environment in which our employees feel that their health, safety and wellbeing is integral to the organisation. We encourage everyone to be part of this positive culture so that we can continue to improve our standards throughout the organisation.”

2. STATEMENT

Colchester Borough Council is fully committed to complying with its statutory duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation. The Council values the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees and will take all reasonably practicable measures to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for all employees, contractors, the public and others that may be affected by its activities.

The Council recognises that good health, safety and wellbeing is integral to our organisational and business performance and our service delivery decisions will always consider the impact on health, safety and wellbeing. This will help to deliver the Council's philosophy of a positive safety culture.

The Council will maintain an appropriate health and safety management system and organisation structure to support its statutory duties. We will:

- Assess risks and put adequate control measures in place
- Consult with employees on matters affecting their health and safety
- Provide and maintain a safe place of work with safe plant, equipment and personal protective equipment
- Ensure safe use, handling and storage of substances
- Provide information, instruction, training and supervision for employees to ensure that they are competent to carry out their tasks
- Prevent incidents, injuries and cases of work-related ill-health
- Maintain safe and healthy working conditions

All employees are required to follow this health and safety policy at all times and adhere to their own statutory requirements. We encourage any comments over health and safety in the workplace and will actively seek to rectify any areas of concern.


All contractors and others employed by Colchester Borough Council to perform work or provide service are required to maintain health and safety standards in accordance with this policy.

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and reviewed as necessary, at least every three years or when circumstances otherwise dictate.



Councillor Mark Cory
Leader of the Council

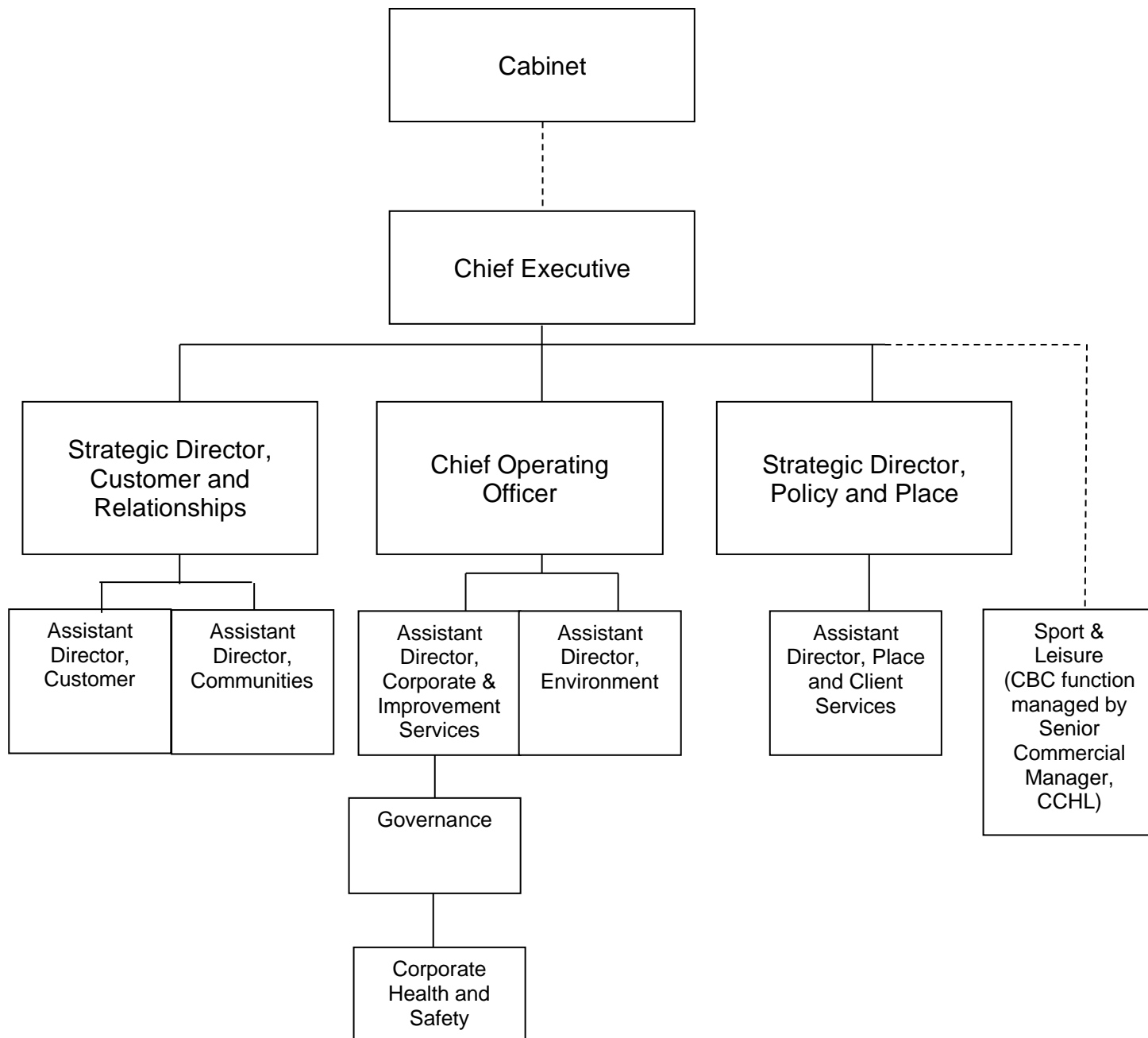
13 June 2018



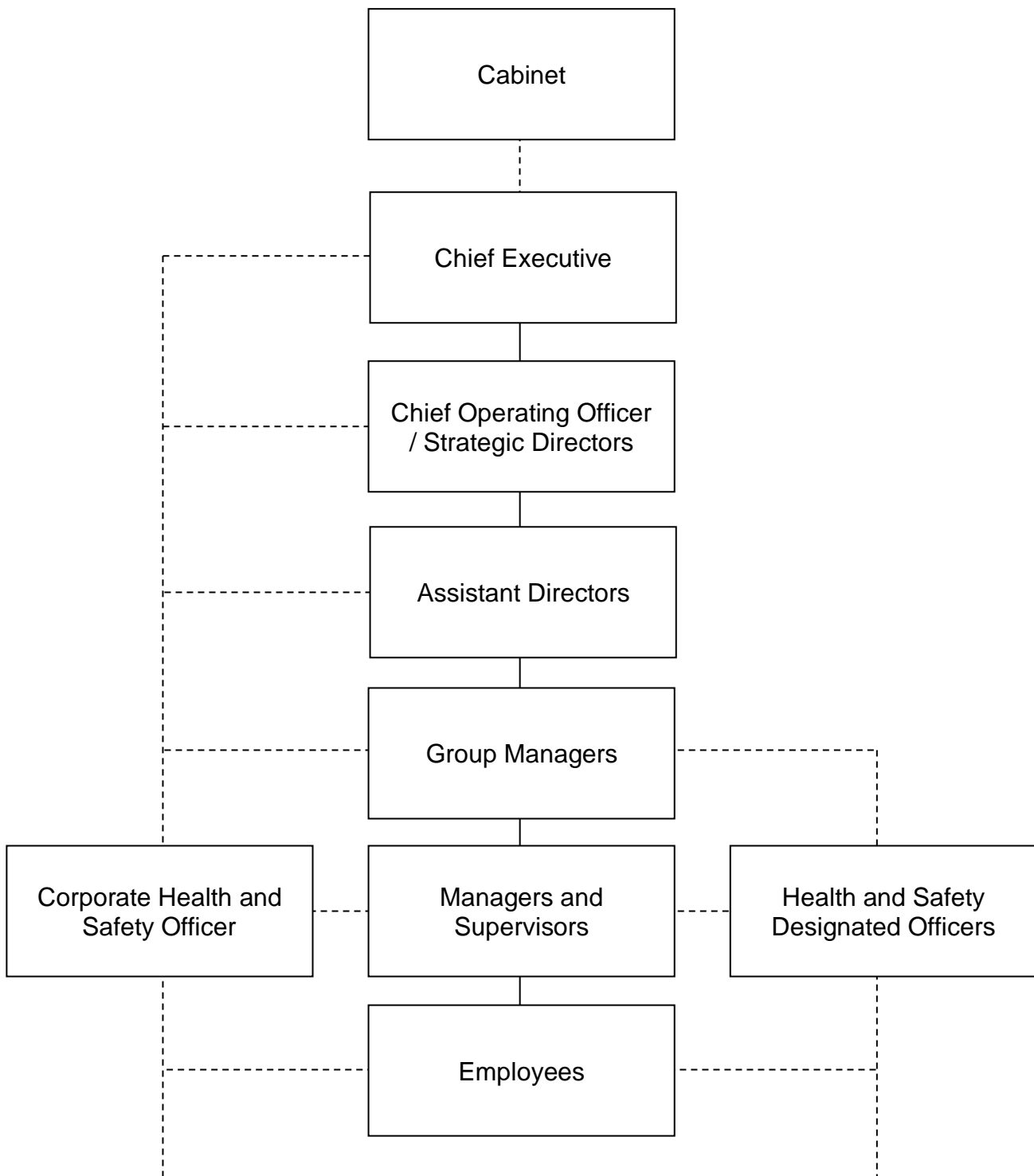
Adrian Pritchard
Chief Executive

3. ORGANISATION

3.1 Organisation Structure



3.2 Organisation Health and Safety Responsibilities



4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.0 Leader of the Council and Cabinet

The Leader of the Council has the responsibility for the management and monitoring of health and safety provision across the whole of the Council's undertakings. Cabinet are jointly and severally the primary duty holders for health and safety across the Council's undertakings.

1. Ensure that adequate financial and other resources are provided, so that the health and safety policy can achieve its aims.
2. Give due regard to requests from the Chief Executive for financial and other resources to meet statutory duties and other obligations regarding health and safety management.
3. Ensure that the Chief Executive has in place an effective health and safety policy and management system, which will ensure that all health and safety hazards and risks within the Council are adequately controlled.
4. Require the Chief Executive to be able to confirm, during the reporting period; health and safety performance, any major incidents or failure in the health and safety management system, accident history and key improvements to health and safety that have been implemented.

4.1 Chief Executive

1. Overall responsibility for health and safety throughout the Council.
2. Support other duty holders to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
3. Preparation of an effective health and safety policy statement, organisation for carrying out that policy, measures for ensuring that it is implemented and communicated to all employees.
4. Ensure that this health and safety policy is reviewed, at least every three years or when circumstances otherwise dictate.
5. Ensure that health and safety is given an appropriately high priority and is not compromised, so putting employees or other persons at risk to their health and safety.
6. Ensure that the Executive Directors are aware of the health and safety policy and understand their responsibilities for effective health and safety management.
7. Ensure that the Executive Directors implement the policy through effective local arrangements and suitable monitoring arrangements.
8. Ensure that adequate financial and other resources are available to meet statutory duties and requirements of this health and safety policy.
9. Ensure that the Council has appointed a competent Corporate Health and Safety Officer for the purpose of advising on meeting its statutory duties and for advising and monitoring on health and safety.
10. Fulfil the responsibilities of the Executive Directors if services are under their direct management.
11. Set a personal example at all times with respect to health and safety.

4.2 Chief Operating Officer (with Responsibility for Health and Safety)

1. Support other duty holders to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
2. Accountable to the Chief Executive for health and safety within all Services.
3. Ensure that their Assistant Directors are aware of the health and safety policy and understand their responsibilities for effective health and safety management.
4. Provide leadership on health and safety and support and promote continuous improvement programmes.
5. Lead the provision and function of the health and safety committee.
6. Monitor health and safety performance at Executive Management Team through quarterly updates, an annual review and ensuring health and safety is an agenda item.
7. Ensure that there is sufficient financial or other resource for effective health and safety management and identify any short falls in resources that may negatively impact health and safety.
8. Provide support to the Corporate Health and Safety Officer and Health and Safety Designated Officers.
9. Ensure that if any serious health and safety occurrence or failure in health and safety occurs, the relevant person/s are held accountable for any deficiency in fulfilling their responsibilities under the health and safety policy and will be required to demonstrate to the Executive Management Team, remedial actions have been implemented to prevent a similar reoccurrence.
10. Set a personal example at all times with respect to health and safety.

4.3 Strategic Directors

1. Support other duty holders to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
2. Accountable to the Chief Executive for health and safety within their Services.
3. Ensure that their Assistant Directors are aware of the health and safety policy and understand their responsibilities for effective health and safety management.
4. Support and promote health and safety continuous improvement programmes.
5. Support the provision and function of the health and safety committee.
6. Monitor health and safety performance at Executive Management Team through quarterly updates, an annual review and ensuring health and safety is an agenda item.
7. Ensure that there is sufficient financial or other resource for effective health and safety management and identify any short falls in resources that may impact health and safety.
8. Ensure that if any serious health and safety occurrence or failure in health and safety occurs, the relevant person/s are held accountable for any deficiency in fulfilling their responsibilities under the health and safety policy and will be required to demonstrate to the Executive Management Team, remedial actions have been implemented to prevent a similar reoccurrence.
9. Set a personal example at all times with respect to health and safety.

4.4 Assistant Directors

1. Support other duty holders to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
2. Accountable to the Chief Operating Officer or Strategic Director for health and safety within their Services.
3. Ensure that their Group Managers are aware of the health and safety policy and understand their responsibilities for effective health and safety management.
4. Support the development, modification and delivery of a health and safety management system and ensure local process compliance.
5. Support and promote health and safety continuous improvement programmes.
6. Monitor and review health and safety processes and performance in their Services, and include appropriate health and safety actions within relevant strategies and business plans.
7. Ensure that there is sufficient financial or other resource for effective health and safety management and identify any short falls in resources that may impact health and safety.
8. Identify health and safety training needs for their Service and ensure this follows the health and safety training matrix and is in line with the Council and legislative requirements.
9. Ensure that their Group Managers have suitable and sufficient risk assessments in place to eliminate or control and reduce risks to acceptable levels including those required under relevant statutory provisions and ensure these are supported by method statements where required.
10. Ensure that for any premises under their direct control and management, adequate arrangements are in place for fire safety management and supported by a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment completed by a competent person.
11. Ensure there is a process to employ competent contractors with the correct skills, knowledge, attitude, training and experience.
12. Ensure that all materials, plant, vehicles, equipment and personal protective equipment procured for use comply with legislation, commercial and any other specific standards which ensure that it is safe and without risk to health when used correctly.
13. Support the carrying out of regular health and safety audits and inspections and ensure the outcomes of these are completed within the agreed timescales.
14. Ensure that if any serious health and safety occurrence or failure in health and safety occurs, the relevant person/s are held accountable for any deficiency in fulfilling their responsibilities under the health and safety policy and will be required to demonstrate to the Executive Management Team, remedial actions have been implemented to prevent a similar reoccurrence.
15. Set a personal example at all times with respect to health and safety.

4.5 Group Managers

1. Support other duty holders to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
2. Accountable to the Assistant Directors for health and safety within their Services.
3. Ensure that their Managers and Supervisors are aware of the health and safety policy and understand their responsibilities for effective health and safety management.
4. Ensure compliance with the local health and safety management system by assigning levels of responsibility to relevant competent persons as required.
5. Support and promote health and safety continuous improvement programmes.
6. Monitor and review health and safety processes and performance in their areas of remit and ensure regular health and safety audits and inspections are carried out and outcomes of these are completed within the agreed timescales.
7. Ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments are in place to eliminate or control and reduce risks to acceptable levels including those required under relevant statutory provisions and ensure these are supported by method statements where required.
8. Ensure that all accidents, incidents and near misses that are work-related or happen on council premises are reported using the online incident report form as soon as possible and no more than 5 days after the accident or incident and an appropriate investigation takes place promptly with remedial actions implemented to prevent a similar occurrence.
9. Ensure that all employees within their group have appropriate information, instruction and training that follows the health and safety training matrix and is in line with the Council and legislative requirements.
10. Ensure that competent contractors with the correct skills, knowledge, attitude, training and experience are employed.
11. Set a personal example at all times with respect to health and safety.

The following may also apply, depending on their specific responsibilities:

12. Ensure that for any premises under their direct control and management, adequate arrangements are in place for fire safety management and supported by a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment completed by a competent person.
13. Ensure that workplace welfare, housekeeping and general safety requirements are effectively managed.

14. Ensure that all materials, plant, vehicles, equipment and personal protective equipment procured for use comply with legislation, commercial and any other specific standards which ensure that it is safe and without risk to health when used correctly.
15. Ensure that all plant, vehicles and equipment is adequately maintained and subjected to statutory examinations where appropriate and relevant records are kept.
16. Ensure that all employees within their group are provided with the correct level of personal protective equipment as identified by risk assessments and that it is maintained or replaced when necessary.
17. Ensure that arrangements are implemented in respect to the requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015.
18. Ensure health and safety is considered during tender of new contracts and contractors employed are competent with suitable health and safety arrangements in place. Monitor and review contractors' health and safety processes and performance.

4.6 Managers and Supervisors

1. Support other duty holders to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
2. Accountable to their Group Manager for health and safety within their Services.
3. Read, understand and implement the requirements of the health and safety policy and health and safety management system.
4. Support and promote health and safety continuous improvement programmes and regularly communicate with employees on health and safety issues.
5. Monitor and review health and safety processes and performance in their areas, teams and premises and ensure regular health and safety audits and inspections are carried out and outcomes of these are completed within the agreed timescales.
6. Ensure that the requirements of risk assessments and method statements are implemented, in place during work and communicated to all employees within their team.
7. Ensure that all employees within their group have appropriate information, instruction and training that follows the health and safety training matrix and is in line with Council and legislative requirements.
8. Not to put any person at an unacceptable risk during the course of work and stop work where any new hazards are identified until the risk has been assessed and controlled and if required reduced to an acceptable level.
9. Ensure that all plant, vehicles and equipment are adequately maintained so it is safe for use and any defective plant, vehicles and equipment is withdraw from use immediately.
10. Ensure that all employees within their team have the correct level of personal protective equipment as identified by risk assessments and that it is maintained or replaced when necessary.
11. Receive, review and remedy any concerns in respect to health and safety. When concerns cannot be resolved at a local level, they shall be referred to the Group Manager and if still unresolved to the Corporate Health and Safety Officer.

4.7 Corporate Health and Safety Officer

1. Support other duty holders to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
2. Review, develop and communicate the health and safety policy and management system in conjunction with other responsible duty holders.
3. Provide competent advice in relation to all health and safety matters and ensure duty holders are kept up-to-date on all relevant health and safety issues.
4. Ensure own competence is maintained through continual professional development.
5. Identify key health and safety training needs and advise on methods of implementation and delivery.
6. Provide a pro-active resource for the development and delivery of health and safety inspections and audits on an agreed programme basis.
7. Provide a reactive resource for the reporting, recording and investigating of accidents and incidents and provide statistical information to the health and safety committee.
8. Provide corporate safety initiatives and ensure there is a continual improvement programme for effective health and safety management and advise on the implementation of programmes.
9. Attend health and safety committee meetings and other relevant health and safety groups and provide guidance and advice where required.
10. Review the performance of health and safety within the Council as a whole, in conjunction with the Executive Management Team.
11. Provide a report to the Executive Management Team on a regular basis which details health and safety performance and update the Executive Director with health and safety responsibilities on all significant health and safety matters.
12. Ensure there is a continual improvement programme for effective health and safety management.
13. Provide a useful and relevant information service, with documents to assist others with their duties and ensure information is updated on a regular basis.
14. Communicate with and provide support, direction and guidance to Health and Safety Designated Officers and ensure they provide support on health and safety matters to duty holders within their area of remit in accordance with their responsibilities.
15. Support duty holders with enforcement agency requests for information, visits and inspections and if required, be the primary point of communication with relevant enforcement agencies.
16. Set a personal example at all times with respect to health and safety.

4.8 Designated Officers for Health and Safety

1. Support other duty holders within their areas of remit to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
2. Read, understand and implement requirements of the health and safety policy and health and safety management system.
3. Be the initial point of contact for health and safety guidance to colleagues and managers in their service area and refer to the Corporate Health and Safety Officer for advice and guidance as appropriate.
4. Support and promote health and safety continuous improvement programmes and regularly communicate with employees on health and safety issues, encouraging suggestions for improvement from colleagues and encourage them to report any health and safety concerns.
5. Attend all health and safety committee meetings or ensure that a suitable deputy attends if unavailable and prepare a report as required.
6. Support other duty holders ensuring that all employees within their responsibility have appropriate information, instruction and training that follows the health and safety training matrix and is in line with legislation.
7. Carry out health and safety review and monitoring as agreed with the Corporate Health and Safety Officer and ensure regular health and safety audits and inspections are carried out and outcomes of these are completed within the agreed timescales.
8. Set a personal example at all times and act as an ambassador with respect to health and safety.

Managers, at all levels, are responsible for the health and safety of their team - this cannot be delegated. However the Designated Officers can support and assist Managers with meeting their obligations.

4.9 Employees

1. Support other duty holders to fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
2. Read, understand and comply with the requirements of the health and safety policy and health and safety management system.
3. Take reasonable care of the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts and or omissions.
4. Work safely at all times, in accordance with the information, instruction, training, risk assessments and method statements provided.
5. Use the correct plant, vehicles, equipment and materials for tasks and keep them in good condition and never use anything for which it is not intended or they are not trained or competent to use.
6. Comply with all safety control measures appropriately, including any personal protective equipment issued and never intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interest of health and safety.
7. Attend and participate in all training provided in the interest of health and safety.
8. Report immediately to their Manager or Supervisor any accidents, incidents, verbal abuse, near misses, occupational diseases and health and safety concerns, including defects to personal protective equipment, plant, vehicle, equipment and material, and any hazards or risks believed to be inadequately controlled.
9. Set a personal example at all times with respect to health and safety.

5. DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Title :	Health and Safety Policy
Status :	Final
Version :	10
Consultation :	SMT, Health and Safety Committee, and Unison
Approved By :	SMT and Governance and Audit Committee
Approval Date :	October 2020
EQIA :	Yes - link
Review Frequency :	Annually or if change occurs (and a comprehensive review every three years)
Next Comprehensive Review:	2021

5.1 Document Control

Date	Version	Description	Sections Affected	Approved by
September 2015	1	Initial draft	All	
April 2016	2	Updated draft. Moved arrangements to separate document.	All except 1 and 2	
June 2016	3	Updated following SMT meeting.	4.0 and 4.9	SMT
July 2016	4	Final draft version - Signatures added	2	Leader of Council and Chief Executive
August 2016	5	Minor amendments following Unison consultation. Final version.	2, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5,	Unison and Executive Director
October 2016	6	Review and endorse the revised Health and Safety policy for 2016/17.	All	Governance and Audit Committee
October 2017	7	Annual review. Organisation structure and job titles updated. Minor amendments to improve comprehension.	All	Corporate Health and Safety Officer
June 2018	8	Updated statement with new leader's signature to approve commitment. Updated structure to include Commercial.	2, 3.1	Corporate Health and Safety Officer, and Leader of Council and Chief Executive
October 2018	8.1	Approved Policy for 2018/19	None	Governance and Audit Committee

October 2019	9	Approved Policy for 2019/20. Updated organisation structure and responsibility for H&S to CEO from Strategic Director	3.1, 4.2	Governance and Audit Committee
October 2020	10	Approved Policy for 2019/20. Updated organisation structure.	3.1	Governance and Audit Committee

Health and Safety Arrangements

These health and safety arrangements detail what the Council will do in practice to achieve the aims set out in the health and safety policy and how we will eliminate or reduce the risks of hazards.

This document will assist managers fulfil their responsibilities set out in the health and safety policy by identifying key elements and providing guidance for practical management of health and safety.

Statutory requirements, Council requirements and industry best practice are identified within the arrangements; however these may not be exhaustive and only provide a generic guide to health and safety. Every service, location and activity is different so must be adapted to the relevant circumstances and additional risks and controls must be considered.

Further information on most health and safety topics can be found on the Council intranet:
[Staff Handbook – Health and Safety Overview \(Policy, Arrangements and Management System\)](#)
[Staff Toolkit – Health and Safety \(Information, Guidance, Forms, etc.\)](#)

Carl Free, the Corporate Health and Safety Officer can be contacted for further health and safety advice on: 01206 506579 or carl.free@colchester.gov.uk

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1 Audit & Review

1.1 Audit

An audit is a structured and objective process of collecting information in order to assess whether the system for safety management is working effectively.

Audits of services or arrangements are completed quarterly where possible by the Corporate Health and Safety Officer. In addition, quarterly inspections of all council corporate workplaces are completed by Designated Officers or responsible persons. An action plan is then produced and handed to the relevant managers. Reports on audits and inspections are presented at the health and safety committee and within the annual and half yearly health and safety report presented at SMT.

1.2 Review

Reviews are necessary to ensure that policies and procedures are kept up to date. We review these whenever any of the following circumstances occur:

- Changes in legislation
- Changes to work processes
- On the introduction of new equipment
- Where there are changes to personnel
- After an incident

If none of the above occur, then all policies and procedures are reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

3 Employee Consultation

Colchester Borough Council recognises its duties under The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977.

It is the policy of Colchester Borough Council to consult with all employees over health and safety matters. We will provide all new employees with a copy of this Health and Safety Policy during their induction and publish it on the staff intranet known as 'COLIN'.

There is a health and safety committee within the Council which sits on a quarterly basis and is attended by staff and union representatives. Information is then disseminated to staff through the Designated Officers for Health and Safety. In addition, committee minutes are published online.

If we intend to make any changes to processes, procedures or equipment that may affect the health and safety of employees and contractors, we will consult with them before doing so.

We operate an open door policy with regards to reporting any concerns or suggestions for improvement and actively encourage this within the Council. Where an employee has made a comment regarding the health and safety of the company, the Health and Safety Officer will investigate and action accordingly.

4 Employee Welfare

4.1 Facilities

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require that suitable welfare facilities are in place for employees. We provide and maintain the following for our staff:

- Toilets with hand washing facilities that have running hot/warm water
- Canteen areas with rest facilities and a means of preparing food
- Storage facilities for belongings where practicable.
- A supply of wholesome drinking water

Local arrangements are detailed during initial inductions to the Council.

4.2 Drug and Alcohol Policy

We are committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for our staff and others. If staff are prescribed medication that may affect their ability to work safely, they should report this to their Manager. The Council's Drug and Alcohol Policy is under review. Additional information is provided in the Disciplinary Rules and Procedures.

4.3 Smoking

We prohibit smoking in all workplaces including company vehicles. More information is contained in the Smoking Policy. Local arrangements are explained by managers as part of the corporate health and safety induction.

4.4 Occupational Stress

We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stress. We will monitor the workload and working hours of employees to ensure that they do not become overloaded.

We encourage all employees to discuss any issues that are concerning them. The Council has a Stress Policy and all employees are encouraged to report any concerns of stress.

There is information for Managers on COLIN which can help them to identify signs of occupational stress so that they can act accordingly.

The Council runs an Employee Assistance Programme through Workplace Options who offer personal support and advice on wellbeing, family matters, relationships, debt management, workplace issues, consumer rights etc. All employees are encouraged to use this service which is free of charge.

4.5 Violence, Discrimination and Harassment

Workplace violence is defined as verbal and physical abuse, including threatening behaviour and assault. This can occur amongst staff or between staff and customers. The Council has a Bullying and Harassment Policy.

The Council condemns all forms of discrimination and harassment and will not tolerate such acts. Disciplinary action will be taken should this occur within the workplace and all concerns should be reported immediately to Managers or Supervisors.

Due to the work carried out, we recognise that employees may at times encounter members of the public who act aggressively towards them. Whilst we take precautions and train our staff to diffuse these situations, unfortunately, they can occur. If a potentially violent incident occurs we ask employees to complete our electronic incident report form so that we can monitor and investigate such incidents accordingly. Once investigated, the manager will then ensure that a suitable resolution is implemented in order to support the member of staff concerned.

We also operate a Cautionary Contact Register (CCR) which contains the details of all members of the public who have behaved in a threatening manner towards Council employees. If employees encounter an individual who behaves in such a manner, they are advised to complete a Cautionary Contact Incident Report Form. This form is then reviewed by the CCR panel to decide whether details of the individual concerned should be entered onto the CCR following a process as described in the CCR Policy.

4.6 Lone Working

Lone working is discouraged wherever possible, but due to the services we carry out, we recognise that this is not always avoidable. As we have many employees who work alone, we operate a lone worker personal monitoring alarm system called 'Skyguard'.

Services with employees who lone work must complete a risk assessment to identify the hazards and risks to lone workers and remove or reduce the risks to a suitable level through appropriate control measures.

Employees are encouraged to be aware, trust their instincts, not ignore warnings, be alert, confident and keep fit, to aid self-protection.

Any physical assault or verbal abuse (above an individual's threshold) to employees must be reported using the online incident reporting form and an investigation carried out by the manager.

As part of the reporting process, the perpetrator can be nominated by the investigating manager for inclusion on the Cautionary Contact Register (CCR).

Further information and guidance is available on the Intranet.

4.7 Personal Protective Equipment

Where a risk assessment has identified that PPE is necessary as the last resort to further control an identified hazard, this will be provided free of charge to all employees.

PPE supplied must comply with the new PPE Regulation 2016/425, and it should have: the relevant EU Type Examination Certification, a Declaration of Conformity, the user instructions supplied in the correct language, CE marked, or a 'BSI Kitemark' which demonstrates that it was tested to and meets a 'published standard'.

Managers must ensure that suitable PPE is provided to all staff members who require it, and that the person knows how to use and store this correctly as well as the procedure for reporting defects.

Once defects are reported, the Manager must ensure that PPE is repaired or replaced before the employee requires it again.

Employees are reminded to use all PPE as instructed and not to interfere with any provisions that have been made with respect to health and safety.

4.8 Workplace Temperature and Extreme Weather

During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable, which depends on work activity and the environmental conditions, however should be at least 16°C, or 13°C if much of the work involves rigorous physical effort.

There is no maximum temperature in the workplace, however the thermal environment should satisfy the majority of people in the workplace and provide thermal comfort (generally between 13°C and 30°C with acceptable temperatures for more strenuous work activities concentrated towards the bottom end of the range, and more sedentary activities towards the higher end).

If thermal discomfort is a risk, and employees are complaining and/or reporting illnesses that may be caused by the thermal environment, managers will review and implement appropriate controls to manage the risks.

Upon heatwave alert from Public Health England (temperatures of 30°C during the day and 15°C at night) additional controls must be considered by managers;

- Reschedule work so staff can stay out of the sun 11am to 3pm (ensuring an 11 hour break between working days)
- Provide more frequent rest breaks and introduce shading to rest and working areas or cooler facilities inside
- Provide specialised personal protective equipment designed for use in heat and/or encourage the removal of personal protective equipment when safe to do so or resting to help encourage heat loss
- Remind staff about recognising the early symptoms of heat stress and how to reduce the risk
- Identify staff who are more susceptible to heat stress (due to an illness, condition, pregnancy, or medication)
- Monitor the health of staff at risk and measure heat stress

Outdoor workers could be at risk of too much sunlight which is harmful to skin, it can cause skin damage including sunburn, blistering and skin ageing and in the long term can lead to an increased risk of skin cancer. Sunscreen and guidance will be provided to staff at risk.

Risk Assessments will include controls for the risk and effects of extreme weather to outdoor workers. The Corporate Health and Safety Officer (in liaison with the Resilience Officer and First Call Officer) will further advise managers in situations of widespread or long term extreme weather.

5 Risk Control

5.1 Risk Assessment

Risk assessments are completed for all reasonably foreseeable risks that may cause harm to staff and anyone else who may be affected by their services and activities.

Managers should record these on the risk assessment template and can use the generic/model risk assessments on the intranet as appropriate, which are then made specific for their particular situation, hazards and risks.

Appropriate control measures are put in place to reduce risks as far as reasonably practicable, using the generally accepted hierarchy of control: Eliminate, Reduce, Isolate, Control, Personal Protective Equipment or Discipline (information, instruction, training and supervision).

Managers complete a Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) assessment for all hazardous substances found in the workplace, using the COSHH assessment template available on the intranet.

Fire Risk Assessments are completed for Council corporate/operational workplaces (where staff are located or primarily used for Council business).

Risks assessments must be up to date, and are reviewed regularly, or if there is new equipment, substances and procedures that could lead to new hazards. Managers also review risk assessments if there have been any significant changes, there are improvements still to be made, if workers have reported concerns or accidents and near misses have occurred.

Relevant risk assessments are communicated to staff during their induction, and when any significant changes have been made.

5.2 Hot Work Permits

A 'Hot Work Permit' is required for any temporary hot work operation involving open flame or producing heat and/or sparks. This includes but is not limited to welding (gas or electric arc), cutting (gas or electric arc), brazing and grinding. The requirement for a permit applies equally to staff and to contractors.

Permits are only granted by an authorised person (Corporate Health and Safety Officer, Health and Safety Designated Officer or Facilities Responsible Person) after they are satisfied the appropriate arrangements are in place to minimise the risk of fire where the work is to be carried out and cancelled once there is no longer a risk of fire.

The necessary precautions are described on our generic/model permit which is available on the intranet.

5.3 Method Statements

Where a risk assessment shows that risks can be reduced further if a set way of working is in place, a method statement will be written by the relevant Manager or Health and Safety Designated Officer.

This document sets out a step by step approach to the task and must be followed in order to ensure that a task is carried out in a safe manner.

Examples method statements are available on COLIN as a guide for Managers needing to complete these for the tasks that workers carry out.

6 Induction and Training

6.1 Inductions

All new employees complete an Induction Checklist with their manager on their first day, which includes important health and safety information such as:

- Corporate Health and Safety Information
- Risk Assessments and Method Statements
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Emergency Arrangements
- First Aid and Welfare Facilities
- Training
- Accident, incident and near miss Reporting
- Reporting Health and Safety concerns and obtaining advice

6.2 Training

Appropriate health and safety training is provided to staff free of charge. Appropriate training may be helping staff to learn how to do something, telling them what they should or should not do, or simply giving them information or instructions, and is not just about formal 'classroom' course. However, for higher risks appropriate training may be extensive, technical courses with formal assessment and qualification.

Risk Assessments must identify any further training needs associated with specific risks and legal requirements for jobs or tasks.

Refresher training is provided as necessary. Managers must consider if further staff training, and the need to highlight any new health and safety implications if new equipment, technology or changes to ways of working are introduced.

A health and safety training matrix is in place which details mandatory health and safety training for all employees (which includes the 'Corporate Health and Safety Induction' course) and recommended training for specific services/employees.

Mandatory training is provided by the Corporate Health and Safety Officer and recommended training is provided or supported as decided by the Corporate Health and Safety Officer. Managers are responsible for providing appropriate and recommended training within their services, and ensuring staff are appropriately trained.

Further information and guidance is available on the intranet.

6.3 Supervision

All new employees are supervised when they first join the Council. Ongoing supervision is then carried out by Managers and Supervisors as appropriate, taking into account the individual and those who work away from direct management/supervision.

Supervision can help monitor the effectiveness of training and whether staff have the necessary capacity and competence for the job.

Contractors have their own legal health and safety responsibilities, but will also be supervised appropriately, proportionate to the task and their familiarity with the location, its procedures, hazards and risks.

6.3 Young Person (under 18)

A Young Person Risk Assessment is completed by Managers for any new young people (under 18), consideration is also given to those who are inexperienced or first language is not English.

7 Accident / Incident Reporting and Investigation

Once an accident / incident has been reported we will:

- Take prompt emergency action (contact emergency services, first aid, etc.)
- Make the area safe (in some cases this may need to be done first)
- Preserve the scene for investigation

An online Incident Report Form (IRF) will be completed for every accident/incident, near miss, verbal abuse (including threats), physical assault or dangerous occurrence that occurs. This applies to incidents involving employees, volunteers, work experience etc. carrying out Council work and members of the public, contractors, etc. on Council property or land.

We actively encourage all staff to report near misses in the workplace using the IRF or 'near miss report card', so we can investigate and identify potential failings or improvements helping prevent future incidents and injuries.

Incidents will be submitted on the IRF as soon as possible and no more than five days after the incident. If the injury is specified (serious / major) or fatal, then the Corporate Health and Safety Officer will be informed without delay.

Managers will complete a health and safety investigation as soon as possible for all incidents. The investigation effort (time and cost) should be relative to the incident severity. Investigation findings and an action plan where necessary to help prevent reoccurrence will be recorded on the IRF.

The Corporate Health and Safety Officer will notify the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) of reportable incidents under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). The HSE will be notified without delay and within 10 days of the incident, or within 15 days for an incident resulting in over 7 day incapacitation. Incidents resulting in 3 to 7 incapacitation are recorded for information only.

The appropriate Manager/s, Group Manager and Senior Management Team (SMT) will receive a summary of the incident, investigation findings and actions, and copy of the completed IRF and F2508.

The Corporate Health and Safety Officer will monitor reported incidents to identify trends and concerns, and report to SMT on a regular basis.

8 Emergency Arrangements

8.1 Fire Safety

The Chief Executive recognises his duties as overall Responsible Person for Colchester Borough Council under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

A fire risk assessment has been carried out for all Council 'Corporate' premises. These are held at each site within the Fire Log Book. We carry out a review of these whenever any significant changes are made to building layouts or processes carried out in them.

All fire protection measures are inspected and serviced in line with regulatory requirements. This is managed at each premises by the Health and Safety Designated Officer or respective Manager for the site.

Our emergency arrangements are made known to our employees during induction and are displayed at conspicuous places throughout each place of work. This information is also communicated to all contractors and visitors to our buildings.

We have designated incident controllers and fire marshalls for each of our sites. These people are trained to carry out this role and we carry out fire drills on a regular basis to ensure that the arrangements remain effective.

8.2 First Aid

Colchester Borough Council recognises its duties under the First Aid Regulations 1981 to supply adequate and appropriate first aid equipment, facilities and people to assist in an emergency. Each place of work has dedicated first aiders. Their details are included in the inductions carried out for all new starters. Should this person change, updated information will be communicated as appropriate.

The Health and Safety Designated Officers or nominated persons for each site are responsible for ensuring there is suitable and sufficient first aid supplies monitoring and re-stocking first aid supplies. Employees are encouraged to inform them if stocks need replenishing.

9 Workplace Safety

We will ensure that all our workplaces (corporate buildings) are safe for our staff and anyone else who may visit our premises or use our services, with safe means of access and egress, and ensure that adequate welfare facilities are provided for people at work.

Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) are responsible for the planned and responsive maintenance and asset management of 'Corporate' buildings, and will act as the 'responsible person' for Legionella and Asbestos management.

We will report matters to CBH management, concerning repairs to or structural defects of these workplaces which may impact health and safety.

Managers named as the 'responsible person' will monitor to ensure suitable health and safety management and statutory inspections are completed within their workplaces.

9.1 Electrical Equipment

The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 requires that all portable electrical equipment is checked at regular intervals. We encourage all staff to check electrical equipment before use and to take out of service and report any defective equipment.

We will ensure that all portable electrical equipment is maintained along the following guidelines, as suggested by the Health and Safety Executive:

Equipment	User Check	Formal Visual Inspection	Combined Inspection and Testing
Battery operated items less than 40 volts	No	No	No
Low voltage items such as telephone equipment	No	No	No
Display screens Desk top computers	No	Yes: 2 – 4 years	No if double insulated, otherwise up to 5 years
Photocopiers Fax machines (not hand held & rarely moved)	No	Yes: 2 – 4 years	No if double insulated, otherwise up to 5 years
Class II Double insulated equipment: Fans Table Lamps (not hand held & moved occasionally)	No	Yes: 2 – 4 years	No
Class II Double insulated equipment: Floor Cleaners Hand held & mobile	Yes	Yes: 6 months – 1 year	No
Class I earthed equipment: Kettles Kitchen equipment Irons	Yes	Yes: 6 months – 1 year	Yes, 1 – 2 years
Cables, leads & plugs connected to the above equipment Mains voltage extension leads	Yes	Yes: 6 months – 4 years dependant on the type of	Yes, 1 – 5 years depending on the type

Battery charging equipment		equipment it is connected to	of equipment it is connected to
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9.2 Workstations and Display Screen Equipment

All staff classed as DSE users (those who regularly use DSE as a significant part of their normal work - daily, for continuous periods of an hour or more) must complete the DSE Workstation Assessment Form during their induction, with the assistance of their manager to ensure that their desk / workstation is set up correctly. All DSE users should then adopt the same principles when hot desking, taking a few moments to ensure their workstation is correctly set up or adjusting as required.

DSE users are encouraged to take regular breaks from looking at their screen and/or sitting, such as 10 minutes every hour, or micro breaks more regularly.

DSE users who substantially change their workstation (or the way it is used), or suffer from pains or discomfort believed to be caused or made worse by working with display screen equipment, must inform their manager and complete a new DSE Workstation Assessment. This helps ensure their workstation is set up correctly and should highlight the areas of concern.

DSE users suffering from pains or discomfort with a correctly set-up workstation or those with pre-existing medical conditions that may be affected by DSE use, must inform their manager, who should seek assistance from the Corporate Health & Safety Officer and/or Occupational Health. The Corporate Health & Safety Officer may visit the user at their workstation to assess and suggest reasonable adjustments if necessary (such as a monitor stand, taking regular breaks or a specialist chair).

Copies of completed DSE assessments must be kept by the manager for three years for possible future reference.

DSE users are entitled, on request, to receive an eye and eyesight examination. Colchester Borough Council will contribute the full costs of the eye and eyesight examination and up to £45 towards glasses prescribed solely for DSE use.

Further information and guidance is available on the intranet.

9.3 Work Equipment

In line with the requirements of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, all equipment used in the workplace will be selected for its suitability for the tasks required and will be used and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Risk Assessments are completed for equipment used in the workplace by managers.

Users are required to carry out a visual check before using any equipment. Where they have concerns over the safety of the equipment, they are to report this immediately to their Manager or Supervisor and take the equipment out of circulation until it has been assessed.

Where any work equipment is hired, we will ensure that this is accompanied by the relevant inspection records to show that it is safe to use.

9.4 Noise and Vibration

We recognise that some equipment used by employees creates noise and vibration which needs to be controlled. Employees are given instruction on the correct use of machinery to reduce noise emissions and are provided with the information gained from risk assessments.

Where the risk assessments identify that PPE is required to further reduce risk, we provide employees with the necessary items and will monitor the use. We encourage employees to raise any concerns they may have about using this type of equipment and will investigate this accordingly.

9.5 Work at Height

Council employees may have to work at height in their activities. They are required to work in accordance with our risk assessments and to use all access equipment in accordance with the training that they have been given.

All access equipment owned by the Council is inspected as required to ensure it is fit for purpose. Anyone using a ladder is required to visually check it for any damage before use. If damage is found they are to take this out of use, label it accordingly and report this to their Manager or Supervisor.

9.6 Manual Handling

Hazardous manual handling operations must be avoided so far as is reasonably practicable, by redesigning the task to avoid moving the load or by automating or mechanising the process.

If hazardous manual handling operations cannot be avoided, managers must complete a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of the risk of injury, ensuring the task, individual, load and working environment is considered.

The risk of injury must be reduced so far as is reasonably practicable. Where possible, manual handling aids / mechanical assistance must be provided, for example, a sack trolley or hoist. Where this is not reasonably practicable then changes to the task, the load and the working environment are explored.

Staff must: follow training and systems of work in place for their safety, use equipment provided for their safety properly, cooperate on health and safety matters, inform their manager if they identify hazardous handling activities, and take care to make sure their activities do not put others at risk.

Further information and guidance is available on the intranet.

9.7 Housekeeping

We encourage all employees to maintain a clean working area and to keep all walkways free from belongings and other items. Bins are provided for all rubbish and employees are encouraged to regularly clear their work areas.

We endeavour to keep all external routes clear and to dispose of rubbish in the appropriate manner.

10 Company Vehicles

The Council publishes a Vehicle User's Handbook which incorporates the Driving for Work Policy. In addition, it provides guidance for those employees who operate a Council owned vehicle.

The Council has a Fleet Working Group which meets on a regular basis to discuss the way in which vehicles are operated throughout the Council.

We ensure that all our vehicles are insured, taxed and have a valid MOT where applicable.

It is standard policy for all drivers to have a break of 45 minutes when driving for any 4.5 hour period.

All new staff should provide their driving licence and the Council will ask to see this on an annual basis. Staff are required to present their driving licence should anything change within this interval. Any employees who drive company vehicles should report any situations which may have an effect on their ability to drive, such as the use of medication that causes drowsiness.

11 Hazardous Substances

We recognise our duties under relevant legislation and have the following procedures in place to satisfy the requirements:

11.1 Asbestos

The majority of asbestos within Council owned buildings was removed as part of an initiative in 2004.

Where this has been left in situ, it has undergone an asbestos management survey from which an asbestos register has been developed. A management survey assesses the condition of any remaining asbestos for normal occupation of the building. Any contractors who arrive to carry out work in our buildings are required to read the register which is held at reception for individual premises and sign to confirm that they understand where asbestos is located. Before any work is carried out that affects the fabric of a building, a refurbishment and demolition survey is carried out which identifies the exact location so that it can be dealt with appropriately.

11.2 Substances Hazardous to Health

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health 2002 requires employers to make assessments of the risk to the health and safety of employees when using hazardous substances.

COSHH assessments are carried out for all hazardous substances used in the workplace. COSHH assessment templates are available on COLIN for Managers to use and amend to the specific requirements for their members of staff.

11.3 Biological Hazards

Due to the work carried out by some of our employees, it is likely that at some point they may come into contact with biological hazards. The principal identified hazards being bird droppings, discarded needles, rats and animal faeces. These matters are taken into consideration when risk assessments are carried out by the relevant managers and appropriate personal protective equipment is issued where required.

11.4 Legionella

Legionella is managed in all corporate buildings by Colchester Borough Homes. All buildings have been subject to a water hygiene risk assessment and have a scheme for control in place.

20 October 2020

Report of	Assistant Director of Corporate & Improvement Services	Author	Andrew Weavers 282213
Title	Review of Remote (Digital) Council Meetings		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 23 June 2020 the Committee requested a review of the implementation of remote committee meetings, which were required as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. An initial report was considered by the Committee on 28 July 2020, and following this Councillors, officers and members of the public were asked to provide their views to help inform the review of remote meetings and formulate recommendations how future meetings should be conducted.

2.0 Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 To consider and note the review of remote meetings undertaken by Colchester Borough Council since 1 June 2020.
- 2.2 To review the Remote Meetings Protocol and recommend whether any changes are required in the light of experience.
- 2.3 The following recommendations be made to Full Council:
- (a) All meetings continue to be remote (digital) by default and hosted via Zoom and live streamed by YouTube for the remainder of this municipal year. However, this be kept under review in the light of evolving Government guidance and legal requirements.
 - (b) All briefings for committee and panel chairs and group spokespersons be held remotely.
 - (c) Consider the possibility of hybrid and face to face meetings but only when both Government Guidance and legislation permits and following a Covid- 19 health and safety risk assessment for each meeting.
 - (d) Chairs of meetings retain flexibility to determine how formal votes are conducted.
 - (i) Non-controversial items be agreed by the chair asking participants to indicate verbally whether anyone is against a proposal.
 - (ii) Where the subject matter is controversial or relates to a quasi -judicial matter, a roll call of councillors be taken to ensure transparency.
 - (e) Chairs of meetings retain the option of being physically present with officers when required, suitably socially distanced, whether it be due to procedural complexity of the meeting or of the nature of business to be transacted.
 - (f) Government be lobbied to extend the Regulations to enable remote and hybrid meetings to continue beyond May 2021.

3.0 Reasons for Recommended Decisions

- 3.1 The Covid -19 pandemic and Government guidance and regulations required the Council's decision making to move to a digital only platform. As we move forward the Council needs to determine how its meetings are conducted safely, in accordance with relevant Government guidance and the legal position.

4.0 Alternative Options

- 4.1 A return to full face to face meetings or hybrid meetings. However, this is not possible at the current time due to the ongoing requirement to ensure that meetings are conducted in accordance with Government guidance including the need to maintain social distancing etc. The current rise in Covid 19 cases demonstrates the need to have a cautious approach to the return of face to face and or use of hybrid meetings.

5.0 Background

- 5.1 At its meeting on 28 July 2020 the Committee considered a report (attached at Appendix 1) on the initial review of remote meetings. The Committee's initial feedback on remote meetings was very positive, although highlighting a number of issues. This report provides the Committee with further details on how remote meetings could be conducted going forward.
- 5.2 All local authority meetings were required by law to be held with all participating councillors physically present in the same room. Due to the challenges of the Covid – 19 pandemic, the Government introduced The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations"). These came in to force on 4 April 2020 and apply to meetings taking place before 7 May 2021. The Regulations enabled Local Authorities:
- the flexibility to hold meetings at any time of day and on any day, to alter how frequently meetings can be held and to move or cancel meetings without requiring further notice.
 - to hold meetings remotely. For the purposes of any statutory requirement, members of the local authority are considered as attending a meeting if they can hear, and where practicable see, and be heard and, where practicable, be seen by other members and the public. This allowed for meetings to be held by remote means including via telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webchat and live streaming. The "where practicable" wording is important because it means that it is not an absolute requirement that every participant can be seen all the time, even when they are speaking.
 - to make standing orders about remote attendance at meetings in relation to voting, access to documents and facilities that can be employed to allow the meeting to be held remotely to suit their own circumstances. (Remote Meetings Procedure Rules and Remote Meetings Protocol were agreed).
 - the "place" at which a local authority meeting is held is not confined to the council building. The "place" may be where the instigator or arranger of the meeting is, or electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers. It could be an officer's or member's home.
 - requirements for a meeting being "open to the public" are satisfied by a local authority holding the meeting remotely. This enabled local authorities to facilitate

and hold remote meetings outside of the council offices and/or remotely and allows for members of the public to attend remotely.

- where documents must be “open to inspection”, this is satisfied by the documents being published on the council’s website. Documents include notices, agendas, reports, background papers, minutes etc. The publication, posting or making available of documents at council offices includes publication on the Council’s website. The normal five clear working day notice of publication of agendas continue to apply.

5.3 This report highlights the benefits and some of the disadvantages of remote meetings. It is suggested that remote meetings are the way forward and Local Authorities should have the flexibility to utilise remote or hybrid meetings in the (post pandemic) future rather than reverting back wholly to “traditional” meetings. It is therefore recommended that the Government be lobbied to extend the Regulations to enable remote meetings to continue to be held in the future.

5.4 The latest advice from Government is that they *“continue to recommend that where meetings can take place digitally, without the need for face-to-face contact, they should do so. The regulations do not preclude physical or hybrid meetings. Where council buildings need to be used for physical meetings, these meetings must be managed within the social distancing guidance and principles.”* As Government has implemented new guidance and regulations in response to the second wave of the pandemic and measures put in place for probably the next six months, it is evident that we will need to continue with remote meetings until the end of the Municipal Year. However, we will keep this under review in light of changing Government advice and consider when we can safely hold either hybrid or face to face meetings.

6.0 Our Experience of remote meetings so far

6.1 Earlier this year we decided to live stream our formal decision-making meetings via Zoom on the Council’s YouTube channel. This has proved to be successful, with councillors, officers and the public able to participate, and has been relatively easy to use. Appendix 2 gives details of viewing figures of our remote meetings, compared to the listening figures (when only the audio recordings of meetings were available to the public) of the same meetings last year. Based on our experience it is suggested that we continue to use Zoom for all our public decision-making meetings. Remote meetings come with additional transparency and accountability and participants need to be aware of this at all times.

6.2 As part of the review a survey was carried out of councillors, officers and the public on their experiences of remote meetings and how they could be improved going forward. The survey was promoted via direct email, the website and on the Council’s social media channels. A total of thirty-two councillors (64%) and thirteen officers responded to the survey, unfortunately no members of the public responded, despite extending the deadline for completion. The full results of the survey are contained at Appendix 3 – councillors and Appendix 4 – officers.

6.3 Overall the surveys demonstrated a positive response to remote meetings, with very positive feedback to the Democratic and IT teams that have facilitated them. There were some issues raised, including items such as connectivity, resources, behaviours and lack of physical interaction and these are considered in the following paragraphs. The key question of whether meetings should be remote, hybrid or face to face in the future prompted the following response:

How should future meetings be conducted?	Councillors	Officers	Total
Remote	13	8	21
Face to face	8	1	9
Hybrid of remote and face to face	7	3	10
No view	4	1	5

As can be seen a majority of respondents felt that future meetings should be remote.

6.4 Some of the comments relating to future meetings included:

"I believe the Council ought to now return to the Town Hall and Rowan House. When Members and Officers can meet together, democracy will be better served. Virtual meetings ought to now be restricted to occasional training sessions, if essential."

"As now. But a firm reminder of meeting disciplines, hands etc and a mandatory break at 90 minutes unless the meeting is close to an end."

"Ultimately, remote meetings are likely to be more efficient for attendees (due to reduced travel time etc) and more accessible for the public (as they can view online), but the working practices are quite difficult in my officer role at Committee."

"All online. It's the future."

6.5 The Councillor survey also asked what the benefits and disadvantages of remote meetings were. Some of the comments in relation to benefits included:

"Being able to meet without risking staff and cllrs also it saves from an environmental perspective by reducing pollution"

"No travel means not getting stuck in traffic = more time with family therefore less resentment."

Some of the comments in relation to disadvantages included:

"Meetings take longer. Harder to concentrate on the discussion."

"Remote meetings do not allow members to fully interact with each other"

6.6 The councillor survey also asked what areas of remote meetings could be improved. Some of the comments included:

"Is there a way of looking/ referencing at the agenda details/page when on the screen. Looks like needing two screens, one for being on the meeting and one to follow the agenda."

"Currently just everyone learning that muting the microphone when not speaking is essential. As is ensuring it is muted and turning off the camera during breaks."

6.7 Remote meetings have required additional officer support to administer. Most face to face meetings are supported by one Democratic Services Officer who would be able to provide the clerking and advisory functions, as well as administer the live audio streaming software. For busy meetings an additional officer may have attended for the start of the meeting to help with the registration of members of the public. With remote meetings, there is increased preparation. Remote meetings themselves will continue to

require two Democratic Services Officers for the duration of the meeting, one providing the governance support role and one dealing with issues such as helping attendees join the meeting, monitoring the live stream, dealing with any connection issues, displaying presentations and reports. Particularly large or complex meetings, such as Full Council, have required a team of officers to support.

- 6.8 The introduction of remote meetings meant that the Council was required to invest in some additional hardware to provide councillors with appropriate equipment. This initial cost amounted to £3.5k. The annual Zoom licences amount to £500 both of these costs were coded to the Council's Covid 19 budget. Some councillors have also enquired whether they could have a second screen to assist them during meetings. The Council's IT team can facilitate this depending on the type of equipment being used. From the Councillor survey results 90% of councillors felt that they had the right equipment to enable them to participate in remote meetings. In addition, the councillor survey results indicated that 88% of councillors felt that they had received sufficient training to enable them to participate in remote meetings. We will seek to provide further training where necessary to ensure that all councillors can participate effectively in remote meetings.
- 6.9 One option for the future is hybrid meetings; i.e. where some participants are in a room (socially distanced) and others remote. This is not being suggested at this time in the light of current Government guidance and regulations. However, if this option becomes viable in the future it is one that we could pursue subject to a Covid-19 health and safety risk assessment being undertaken for each meeting. This could enable either the Moot Hall and/or the Grand Jury Room to be utilised for this purpose.
- 6.10 As well as maintaining public involvement in meetings through Have Your Say, there is evidence that remote meetings have helped increase public engagement with meetings and have improved the transparency of decision making. The table and graphs at Appendix 2 show the number of views of each meeting held remotely since June 2020. The figures show that more people are viewing through the YouTube live stream than listened through the audio stream for the similar period last year. There have been 5780 views of meetings on You Tube from June – September 2020. The comparative figure for listens on Audio Minutes over the same period last year was 3,517. This indicates that more members of the public are engaging with remote public meetings. We will continue to monitor and report on these levels. In addition, the Democratic Team has received some very positive feedback from some members of the public about the benefits of live streaming such as the comment below: -

“Also - well done for holding the Zoom sessions and streaming to YouTube. First time for a long time I have felt that I can easily dip-into council discussions on topics and hear first-hand considerations.”

- 6.11 Remote meeting by their very nature require the participants to behave differently than in face to face meetings. In preparation for the introduction of remote meetings, a protocol was prepared and agreed by the Group Leaders and circulated to all councillors. A copy is at Appendix 3. In view of some of the comments made in the responses to the councillor survey it is worth noting that the protocol emphasises: -

You should also try to avoid eating or drinking during the meeting unless this is necessary and can be done discretely. Although being held remotely, meetings are still formal and should be treated as though they were being held in person, with the same expectations of appearance and behaviour. Although it is easy to forget, given the nature of the meeting, Councillors will still be on public display throughout, potentially to a wider audience than would normally be in attendance at a physical meeting.

The results of the councillor survey revealed that 72% of respondents felt that the protocol was helpful. The Committee are invited to review the protocol and consider whether it needs updating in the light of experience and comments made during the course of the survey.

- 6.12 Remote meeting have proved particularly successful for the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee meetings, obviating the need for councillors and officers to travel to different locations to attend meetings in the County. It has had a similar impact on the Colchester and Ipswich Museums Joint Committee.
- 6.13 Remote meetings have meant that agendas have been digital for all meetings. Whilst it can be more challenging for some meetings, digital agendas have proved successful and mean a budget saving with printing costs being eliminated. By way of background agenda printing costs in 2019/20 amounted to £11k. With digital agendas there is no need for a weekly delivery of papers to councillors and accordingly a further saving from ceasing home deliveries. It is proposed that all meeting agendas remain digital going forward, regardless of whether the meeting is face to face or remote unless there is a demonstrable need for a paper agenda for individual councillors.
- 6.14 One of the key benefits of remote meetings is the flexibility it provides to councillors and officers to join meetings, even if they are away from Colchester. A number of councillors have been able to join meetings whilst on holiday or otherwise away from Colchester, and in circumstances when they would have had to send apologies. With the Regulations making it clear that participation by a councillor at a remote meeting counts towards their attendance, the number of substitutions for meetings has been low.
- 6.15 All briefings for meeting chairs and group spokespersons have been remote during this period. The briefings have worked well and have eliminated councillor and officer travelling time etc. It is accordingly recommended that briefings for meeting chairs and group spokespersons remain remote going forward.
- 6.16 Remote meetings also bring challenges for those chairing meetings. The nature of remote meetings makes it difficult for a chair to seek officer informal advice during the meeting particularly from the Democratic Services Officer. However, with the Remote Meetings Protocol and a new way of working being embedded this becomes easier once the participants become more familiar with the meeting structure. The option is available for the chair of a meeting to be in a room with officers if required. This has been used for, Full Council due to the number of participants and the often procedurally complicated nature of the business being transacted.
- 6.17 Voting in remote meetings poses some challenges as compared with face to face meetings. The key in a remote meeting is transparency of decision making. It is important that the public viewing can understand how councillors have voted, as they would in a face to face meeting. This is particularly important for meetings where not all of the participants are visible on the screen. The Remote Meetings Procedure Rules provide that the chair of a meeting has flexibility to require that every question to be determined at a meeting is done so by either each councillor:
- (i) stating verbally whether they are for, against or abstaining; or
 - (ii) to indicate by a show of hands.

In practice this has led to most decisions being taken via a roll call particularly where the decision may be controversial or quasi – judicial. Other decisions where there is consensus could be taken via a show of hands or for a request for any councillor to indicate verbal dissent to a decision. It is however important that the chair retains some flexibility to deal with individual circumstances. It is suggested that the Remote Meetings

Procedure Rules and the Protocol be amended to clarify the circumstances when it would be appropriate to have a roll call and when to have a more informal process.

- 6.18 Remote meetings required the Council to adapt how the public participated with meetings via “Have Your Say!”. This was changed to permit either written submissions of up to 500 words or a live remote video contribution of up to 3 minutes. Members of the public are required to register and provide a written copy of their submission by 12.00 noon the day before the meeting. Whilst the need for this has been queried on occasions, it has proved invaluable as it is allowed submissions to be read to the meeting when some speakers have had technical issues joining the meeting. Both methods have worked well, and it is suggested that these options are retained going forward. The same facility has been made available to visiting councillors to and it is suggested that this is also retained going forward even if the meeting is hybrid or a face to face meeting.
- 6.19 It had been anticipated that remote meetings would take longer than face to face meetings, due to the slightly more formal structure and procedures such as voting by roll call. An analysis of the length of the remote meetings held to 4 September 2020, against the length of the meetings over the corresponding period in 2019 has been completed and is at Appendix 6. This shows a fairly marginal increase in the average length of a meeting from 2 hours 10 minutes, to 2 hours 18 minutes. However, there are notable increases in the length of some meetings: Cabinet has increased from 1 hour 55 minutes to 2 hours 39 minutes on average, and the average length of a Scrutiny meeting has also increased. The length of Planning Committee meetings has been reduced, but this will partly be explained by the change in the scheme of delegation whereby fewer applications are being referred to Committee.
- 6.20 One of the issues highlighted in the councillor survey is concern about the impact of long meetings being conducted online. The survey highlighted that 63% of councillors felt that they were given enough break times during meetings. The survey also found that 69% councillors felt that the four-hour maximum duration for remote meetings was too long. It is recognised that there are some meetings that by their very nature will be longer meetings due to the complexity of the business to be transacted. The Committee is invited to consider whether it is necessary either amend the Protocol or Remote Procedure Rules to address the issue in light of the comments made in the survey.
- 6.21 At its meeting on 10 March 2020, the Committee made a recommendation to Cabinet that the potential benefits of webcasting public meetings be considered further. Cabinet endorsed this recommendation at its meeting on 8 July 2020. Whilst the streaming of remote meetings through YouTube has met this objective, should the Council move to hybrid or face to face meetings, there would be a need to look again at streaming options. In terms of costs of a solution for streaming hybrid meetings, the Council is currently looking at an inhouse solution using existing equipment and it is intended that this will be trialled at the Full Council meeting on 21 October 2020.
- 6.22 If a more sophisticated solution were to be sought through a third party provider, such as Public I, the costs are likely to be significant, and in line with those reported to the Committee on 10 March 2020 when it considered the benefits of webcasting, which are set out below:
1. *Lease contract – To provide and install three HD quality cameras, webcasting software, hosting and support for a typical 60-hour contract for any period between one and five years starting at £24k for one year, reducing to below £15k annually for a £72k five year contract.*

2. *Purchase and installation by the Council of cameras, AV rack, associated equipment, integration with microphones and cabling at a cost of approx. £19k plus Lease contract - Webcasting software, hosting, support and on-line monitoring for a typical 60-hour contract for any period between one and five years starting at £11k for one year, reducing to below £8k annually for a £38k five year contract.*

Public I have indicated that to deliver a solution that would serve hybrid meetings effectively would need to be slightly adjusted to include additional hardware. There is currently no budget for such a solution.

- 6.23 It is suggested that work on future webcasting options continue with a view to a costed proposal being submitted to the Committee in due course.

7.0 Financial Implications

As mentioned above the direct costs in enabling remote meetings amounted to £3.5k for councillors IT equipment and £500 for the annual Zoom licences. There is currently no identified budget for any webcasting solution.

8.0 Consultation Implications

A public consultation exercise has been undertaken, together with a survey of councillors and officers in order to inform this report.

9.0 Health and Safety Implications

- 9.1 Any hybrid or face to face meetings will be required to be Covid-19 safe. This means that in addition to complying with social distancing requirements etc, we will be required to undertake a Covid-19 health and safety risk assessment for individual meetings. We will also need to consider whether any participants are within any higher-risk health categories.
- 9.2 The Council's Corporate Health and Safety Officer has advised that it would be possible to configure the Grand Jury / West Committee Room to hold approx. 12 participants in its familiar layout. However, we would need tables/chairs set up reaching almost the length of both rooms due to the distancing needed between them. It may be possible to accommodate 2-4 of members of public at seats on the sides. Windows would be required to be open during the meeting to ensure good ventilation.
- 9.3 The Moot Hall could be configured with tables and chairs in roughly the Council Chamber layout but 1m distanced between each participant. This would go from the edge of the stage area to around slightly over half the length of the room, and then allow space behind for approximately 15-20 members of the public. The side doors leading to the outside balcony would need to be opened for ventilation, but it could be made Covid secure for meetings, however it would require stringent controls for entry and exit. As social distancing would be less than 2m face coverings would be required during the meeting.
- 9.4 Although not being recommended at this time, with 1m social distancing the Council chamber could be used by a maximum of 31 participants (roughly every other seat) and 4 members of public. However, as the Chamber has limited ventilation the fire escape door and window behind it would have to be kept open to increase the ventilation. Again, as participants would be under 2m apart face coverings would be required to be worn for the duration of the meeting.

- 9.5 The Council's Facilities Team are investigating whether the air handling units in the Town Hall provide fresh air as this may be sufficient ventilation instead of opening the windows and doors, although keeping them open to increase ventilation would be recommended where possible.
- 9.6 None of the options mentioned in 9.2 to 9.5 above are currently being recommended from a health and safety aspect. The current health and safety advice is to remain with remote meetings at this time, but keep it under review.

10.0 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 10.1 There are direct environmental benefits with remote meetings which support the Council's green agenda and assist towards its CO₂ reduction ambitions. The most obvious one being the reduction in car journeys and CO₂ emissions for journeys to and from the Town Hall for meetings.

The following estimates indicative and are based on all councillors attending meetings via a petrol car based on 29 Council meetings and 628 councillor one-way journeys from home to the Town Hall and back.

Length of round journey (miles)	Avoided miles travelled	Saving of CO ₂ (tonnes)	CO ₂ avoided from vehicle emissions (kg)
4	1256	0.37	370
6	1884	0.55	550
10	3140	0.91	910

- 10.2 In addition there will have been a saving in electricity consumption at the Town Hall. Whilst this is difficult to attribute purely to remote meetings, the 19/20 annual emission figures for the Town Hall were 224,696.6 kwh of electricity in 12 months, which is equivalent to 57.4 tonnes of CO₂. We would expect a significant reduction in 20/21 due to reduced use of the building both for meetings and other events.

11.0 Standard References

There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; community safety; risk management, publicity implications

Appendices:

Appendix 1: 28 July 2020 Report to Governance and Audit Committee

Appendix 2: YouTube viewing statistics

Appendix 3: Councillor survey results

Appendix 4: Officer survey results

Appendix 5: Remote Meetings Protocol

Appendix 6: Length of meetings

Governance & Audit Committee

Item
8

28 July 2020

Report of	Assistant Director of Corporate & Improvement Services	Author	Hayley McGrath 508902
Title	Initial summary of Digital Council Meetings		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the meeting on 23 June 2020 the committee requested a brief summary of the implementation of virtual committee meetings, that were required as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This paper gives a summary overview of the work and meetings that have taken place so far, and invites Councillors, and officers, to provide their views to help inform a detailed review of digital meetings, which will be reported to the committee later in the year.

2.0 Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 To consider and note the summary of virtual meetings undertaken by Colchester Borough Council since June 2020.
- 2.2 To note the future review of digital meetings.

3.0 Reasons for Recommended Decisions

- 3.1 The process for digital meetings is still being refined. Therefore, this report is for information only and further work will be undertaken to provide a more comprehensive review of digital meetings and any necessary decisions that may be required.

4.0 Alternative Options

- 4.1 As the report is for consideration and noting there are no alternative options.

5.0 Summary of Work Undertaken

- 5.1 The government decision in March 2020 to put 'lockdown' restrictions in place meant that it was not possible to have face-to-face committee meetings and Council business was effectively put on hold whilst an alternative solution could be found.
- 5.2 Whilst the Coronavirus legislation allowed for annual meetings to be postponed until 2021, it was necessary to ensure that decision making could be resumed as soon as possible.
- 5.3 Whilst the Council had been investigating digital meetings previously, there had been no decision on digital solutions or processes. Therefore, a suitable video conferencing system had to be implemented prior to the decision-making process resuming at the beginning of June. A process for allowing members of the public to still have their say was also implemented.

- 5.4 The Council was not using any video conferencing systems prior to the pandemic and as a result there was a very short time frame to identify a suitable system, roll it out to all users, produce user guides and train all participants on how to conduct meetings, as well as ensure that they all had suitable equipment to allow them to participate in meetings.
- 5.5 Since 01 June a full 'cycle' of committee meetings has taken place with every member now having taken part in at least one meeting. The meetings are live streamed on YouTube and are available for download. The full list of meetings, and the on-line viewing numbers are shown below:

Meeting	Date	Views
Scrutiny	01/06/2020	292 views
Cabinet	03/06/2020	462 views
Licensing	10/06/2020	138 views
Policy and Public Initiatives Panel	17/06/2020	153 views
Planning	18/06/2020	429 views
Governance and Audit	23/06/2020	161 views
North Essex Parking Partnership	25/06/2020	100 views
Licensing Sub-Committee	01/07/2020	219 views
Scrutiny	07/07/2020	292 views
Cabinet	08/07/2020	340 views
Planning	09/07/2020	125 views
Local Plan	14/07/2020	365 views
Council	15/07/2020	329 views

- 5.6 The feedback from members, officers and the public has generally been very good. Whilst there is a natural desire to have face to face meetings all participants are getting used to the new skills of digital meetings. Democratic Services have not received any specific complaints or concerns about the meetings.
- 5.7 Some of the benefits of the digital meetings have included the ability of members to participate from wherever they are based, no paper agendas for any meeting and greater accessibility for the public - one of the public speakers for the Licensing Sub-committee joined from an overseas location and stated that she would not have been able to participate previously as she could not attend in person. The number of online views for each committee is considerably more than the previous audio streaming.
- 5.8 There have been some connection issues as members get used to the new systems and these have predominantly about logging on and use of microphones and videos. There is a guide to meeting etiquette, and on the whole participants are following it.
- 5.9 Digital meetings do require more officer support than physical meetings, especially at the start of each meeting. Currently at least two Democratic Officers and an IT support officer will be online to assist members with logging on, changing the names that are displayed, checking video and audio connections and signalling if a participant has dropped out, which may require a meeting to be put on hold until they can reconnect.

6.0 Future Review of Digital Meetings

- 6.1 Currently there has been no decision about a timescale for physical meetings to be restarted and risk assessments are being undertaken to set out proposals for how limited meetings may be able to take place, in line with government regulations.

- 6.2 Whilst there have been no significant issues with regards to the digital meetings that have taken place, a full analysis needs to be undertaken to review the success and future options for digital meetings.
- 6.3 Therefore further work will be undertaken to review the full impact of digital meetings and set out recommendations for future actions, to ensure that there is a full and robust decision-making process whilst at the same time allowing for any social distancing regulations.
- 6.4 To help inform the review process all members will be invited to share their experiences of digital meetings and any suggestions they may have. A final report will be submitted to this committee later in the year.

7.0 Standard References

- 7.1 There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety; risk management or environmental and sustainability implications.

You Tube Viewing Statistics: June – September 2020

APPENDIX 2

Meeting	Date	Number of live views	Peak concurrent viewers	Total number views	Total watch time	Average watch time	Meeting duration
Scrutiny Panel	01/06/2020	106	16	304	35	20.21	3.05
Cabinet	03/06/2020	240	40	483	96	25	3.05
Licensing Committee	10/06/2020	19	8	149	3	11.35	0.32
Policy & Public Initiatives Panel	17/06/2020	44	8	163	7	10.46	1.54
Planning Committee	18/06/2020	130	52	480	72	42.01	2.31
Governance and Audit	23/06/2020	57	10	204	14	14.56	2.28
North Essex Parking Partnership	25/06/2020	25	9	129	15	36.56	2.32
Licensing sub-committee - SEV	01/07/2020	57	7	261	12	13.26	2.3
Scrutiny Panel	07/07/2020	171	37	322	72	29.48	3.09
Cabinet	08/07/2020	136	28	419	48	27.49	3.1
Planning Committee	09/07/2020	33	17	176	17	31.43	1.15
Local Plan Committee	14/07/2020	129	41	536	72	38.56	2.45
Council	15/07/2020	192	38	383	96	32.46	4.01
Scrutiny Panel	21/07/2020	54	10	136	12	14.26	2.23
Scrutiny Panel	27/07/2020	56	25	117	20	22.59	1.12
Governance and Audit	28/07/2020	27	4	66	2	4.33	0.59
Planning Committee	30/07/2020	118	40	211	72	44.31	2.53
Policy Panel	05/08/2020	25	5	78	2	6.48	1.13
Licensing Committee	11/08/2020	10	4	41	0.23	2.22	0.18
Extraordinary Council Meeting	12/08/2020	60	23	132	26	26.08	1.31
Scrutiny Panel	17/08/2020	77	23	181	48	38.11	2.56
Scrutiny Panel	18/08/2020	70	16	164	33	28.57	3.56
Cabinet	19/08/2020	80	24	180	28	21.25	1.45
Planning Committee	20/08/2020	31	13	119	12	24.58	1.16
Local Plan Committee	24/08/2020	55	9	110	21	23.05	3.44
Cabinet	02/09/2020	88	21	139	41	25.02	2.39
Governance and Audit	08/09/2020	21	5	49	4	11.3	1.3
Crime and Disorder Committee	15/09/2020	48	5	48	7	9.48	2
Totals		2159	average of 19 per meeting	5780	887 hours 23 minutes	23 minutes average watch time per meeting	

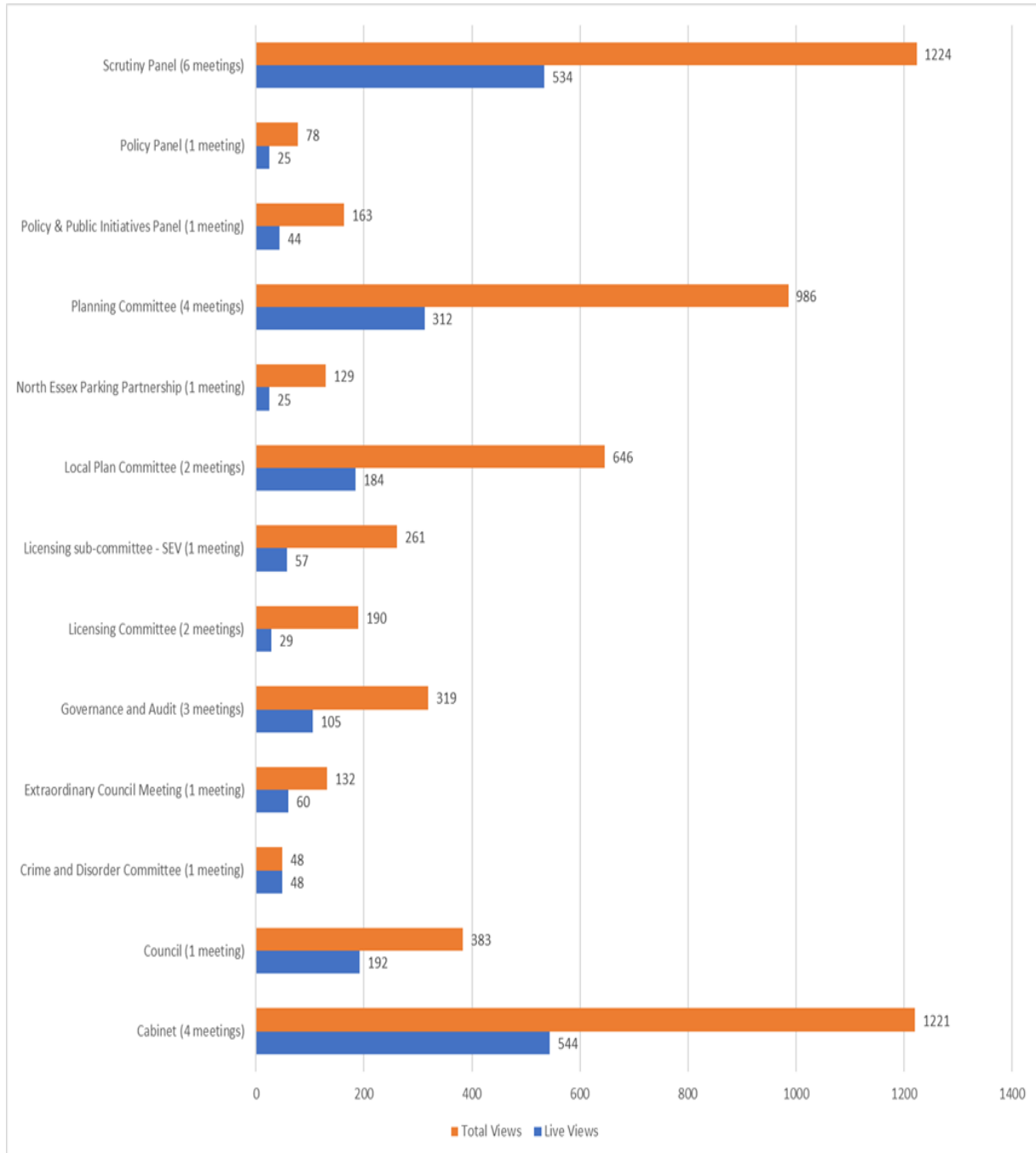
50 shares of the videos

64 Likes

8 dislikes

Views by Meeting Type

(Live and Total Views)

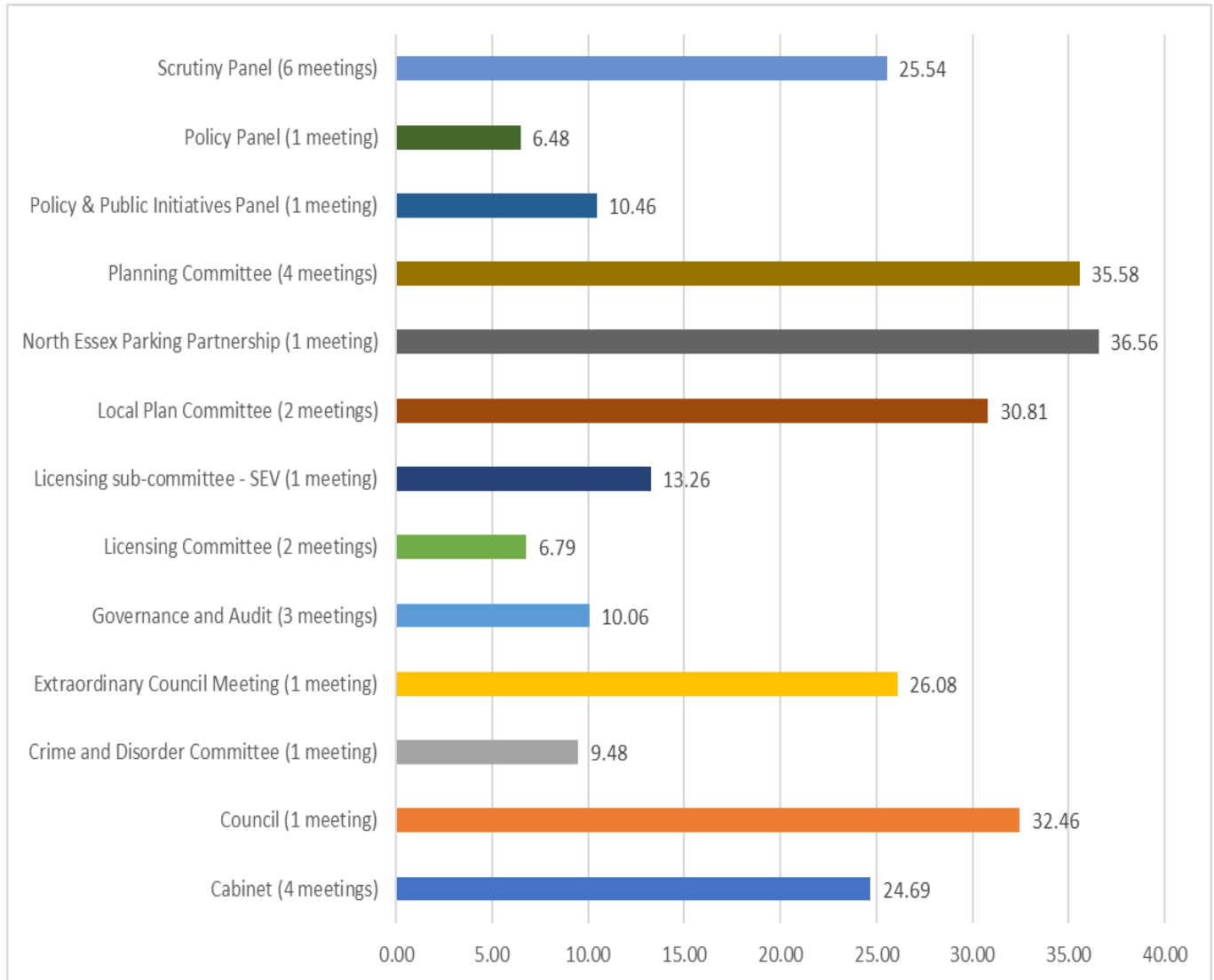


June – September 2020 – total views via YouTube = 5780

June – September 2019 – total listens via Audiominutes = 3517

Average Meeting Watch Time

(In Minutes and by Meeting Type)



Meeting Type	Average Meeting Length
Cabinet	2.50
Council	4.01
Crime and Disorder Committee	2.00
Extraordinary Council Meeting	1.31
Governance and Audit	1.39
Licensing Committee	0.25
Licensing sub-committee - SEV	2.30
Local Plan Committee	2.95
North Essex Parking Partnership	2.32
Planning Committee	1.79
Policy & Public Initiatives Panel	1.54
Policy Panel	1.13
Scrutiny Panel	2.60



Remote Meetings Questionnaire

Members

Introduction

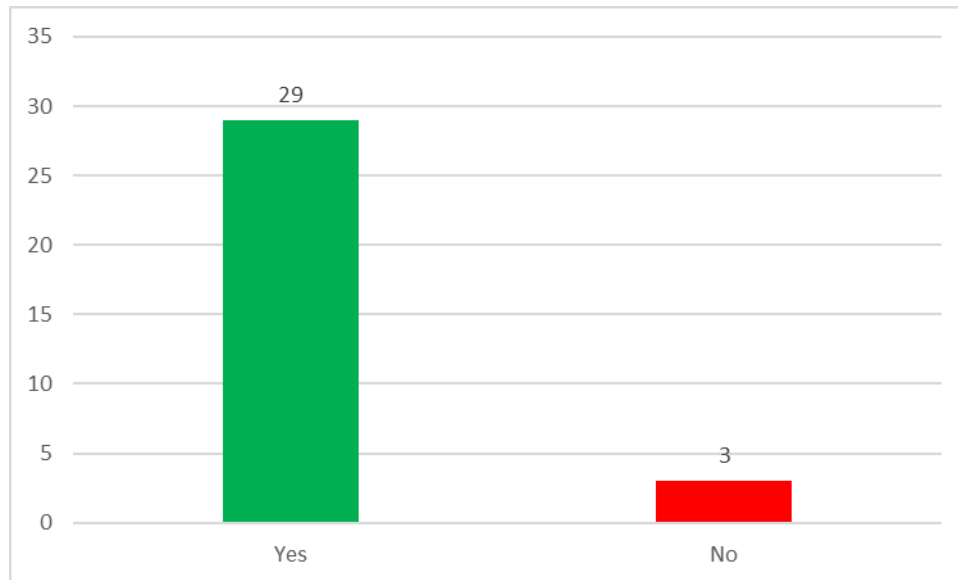
Since May 2020 following the Covid-19 Coronavirus lockdown, Colchester Borough Council has been conducting committee meetings on-line.

Now that all committees have met on-line, at least once, Members were asked to provide their views on how they have found the process, and if they have any suggestions on how remote meetings can be improved going forward.

Members were surveyed in September 2020 with 32 responses being received.

Q1. Do you have the right equipment to enable you to fully participate in remote meetings?

If not, what do you feel would help you?



Comments:

Luckily I have my own

Yes - but rather belatedly

Some more support
needed navigating IT

Yes, plus a backup kit

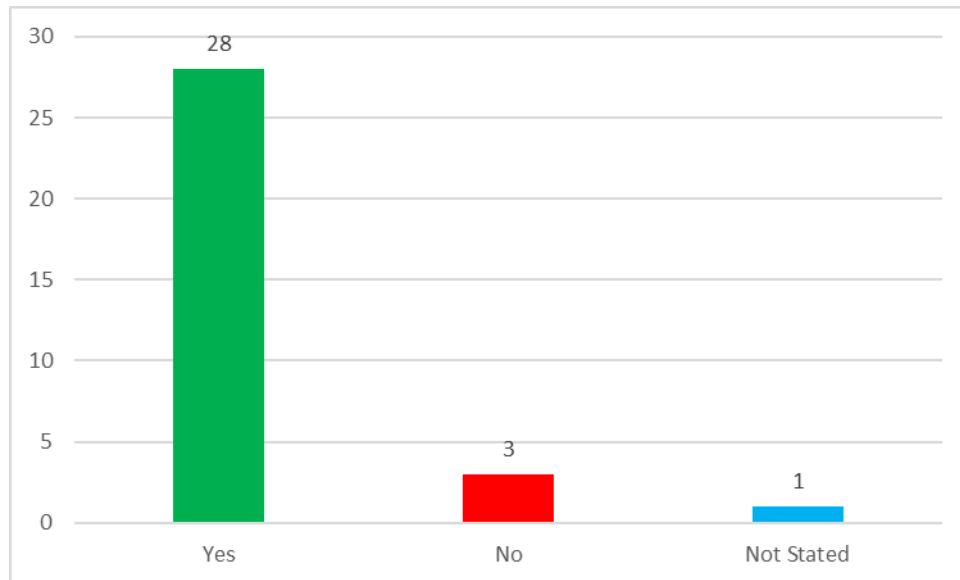
Yes, although when on
the go, headphones for
use with a mobile phone
would be helpful.

No mic on Laptop and no
CBC email or calendar on
iPad so a bit of
forwarding goes on.
Need to pick up emails
on Ipad.

I need hard copies of
meeting papers. I cannot
read on line and take
part in a zoom/teams
meeting.

Q2. Do you feel that you have received sufficient training to be able to participate in remote meetings?

If not, what further training do you feel that you need?



Comments:

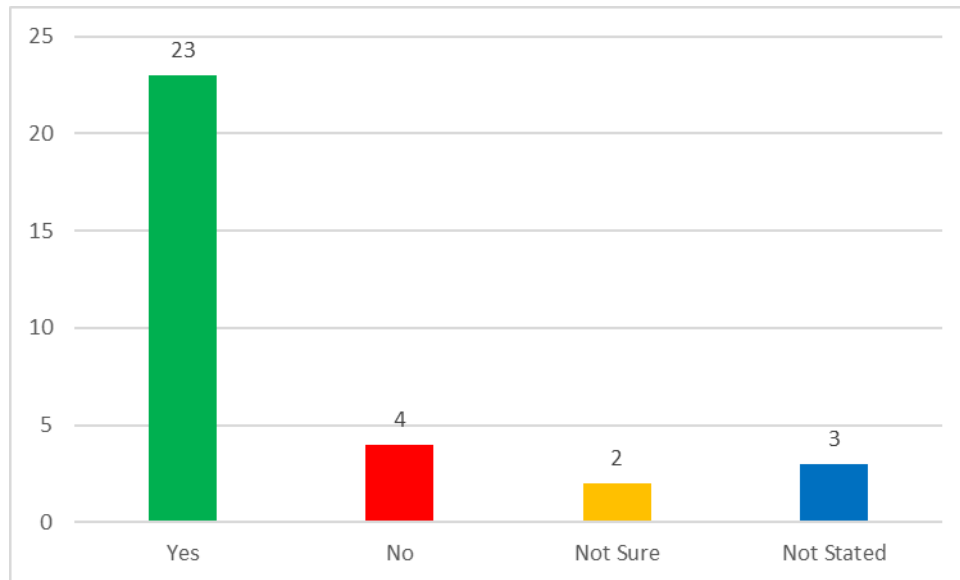
No - I am now able to access meetings but there were difficulties at the beginning and I feel that all Councillors should have been given full instructions much earlier on

At present I can only access Teams on my phone and not council laptop. This makes it more difficult to participate fully. I have requested help several times but as yet no one has solved my problem.

I need help with navigating moving from ECC teams and CBC teams

3. Do you feel that the Remote Meeting Protocol is helpful?

Are there any other issues that should be included in the Remote Meeting Protocol?



Comments:

Yes, but don't sit in the dark, also try not to have your face in shadow or sit in front of a window with sunlight behind you.

Yes the remote meeting protocol is helpful.

If you're going to read something out hold the paper up rather than looking down and all I can see is the top of a head. When speaking turn camera on. Keep slides to a minimum.

Reminders that the public watch these meetings and having Councillors roll up cigarettes and smoking is not a good sign. Also drinking alcohol and asking for alcohol on screen is not a good image.

Feel though that all should be reminded in making sure that we put a good image over when on camera.

I think we need more clarity on how often we need votes when there are no objections to proposals and things can be passed nem con.

Some meetings have left members of the public as part of the meeting when they should be removed. This needs tighter management in future.

Not sure what the protocol is?

Just a reminder that in public meetings councillors should remain visible.

Clearer instructions on indicating to speak - electronic hands up or waving frantically. Keep mics off.

Q4. What do you feel are the benefits and disadvantages of remote meetings?

4a. Benefits:

The answers to this question have been grouped into the below themes:

Saves on time, travel and money	Better than nothing when it is not possible to hold actual meetings.	Easier to attend.	Safer at home Easier to book No disadvantages
Keeps councillors focused.	Being able to meet without risking staff and cllrs also it saves from an environmental perspective by reducing pollution.	Only benefit is that meetings are being held and decisions made.	Easier to fit around work and childcare commitments.
Objectivity, lack of interruptions, control.	Less need to travel in to town so often, especially during winter and cold wet evenings.	Clothing can be less formal.	Flexibility, more time efficient (especially if a visiting councillor).
Remote Meetings are valuable as a supplement to normal meetings. They can be quickly set up and organised, as well as recorded and broadcast.	The "Chat room" is really quite useful.	Remote is good for briefings.	Ability to attend to other matters (without first seeking the consent of the Mayor or chairman) during boring contributions, or those that just repeat what has already been said.
	Not having to Shout at people when they can't hear me.	No travel means not getting stuck in traffic = more time with family therefore less resentment.	

4b. Disadvantages:

The answers to this question have been grouped into the below themes:

You miss the human contact.

Personal interaction, discussion with colleagues, gaining information from officers.

Remote meetings do not allow members to fully interact with each other.

Meetings take longer. Harder to concentrate on the discussion.

Can't read body language especially on full council meetings when you need to scroll through all the screens.

No before or after chat which is often an important opportunity to find common ground and resolve issues.

it's hopeless in term of public scrutiny as we are feeling too safe in our own territory.

When a controversial planning application comes before the committee, remote meetings do not convey the strength of feeling among the public attending.

Not so easy to have a full discussion as someone may raise a point but it is difficult to ask questions while they are talking and the moment could have passed by the time you are able to speak.

Communication is often more than verbal, body language is lost on Teams and Zoom.

With no travel required - that time is regularly filled with another meeting. This can lead to eye strain and brain faze.

The disadvantage is that there is now hardly any break times and we do need to build these in more.

Responses can be slow and not so spontaneous at times. Eyes get very tired looking at the screen.

No atmosphere .. no eye contact ... no social interaction.

Loss of human connections with fellow councillors.

Connectivity is a problem also residents can feel left out if they do not have the equipment.

Can't informally interact with others. Hard to "read the room" especially when chairing.

Possibility that less preparation will be carried out for meetings.

Danger of parties becoming further apart with polarisation without face-to-face contact.

Q5. Do you feel that there are any areas of remote meetings that could be improved?

If one is not on the particular panel / committee, having to access the meeting through YouTube is a nightmare. There should be the possibility for non-panel members to join too.

Voting by hand rather than named vote, except for reasons normally given in full council.

We should be supplied with council laptops.

Keep agendas as short as possible. I'm not a fan of the chairing style where the chair comes to every member in turn for questions.

Dress code for Councillors. No silly slogans displayed on screen.

Shorter meetings.

The time lag when people are trying to umute Perhaps need an officer to do that quickly for all.

Perhaps the concept of a chat room before meetings could improve interactions between Councillors.

On the whole I think staff have done well to get us all up and running!!!

Is there a way of looking/referencing at the agenda details/page when on the screen. Looks like needing two screens, one for being on the meeting and one to follow the agenda.

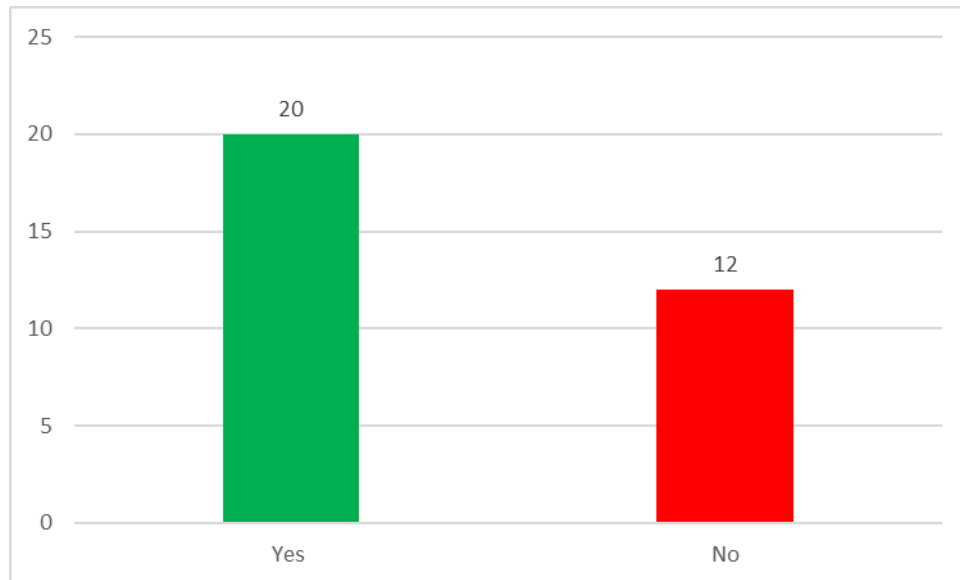
I think we could take more advantage of opportunities for submitting questions without needing to speak. It would save time if we could use the chat function, or something similar, to submit questions.

Currently just everyone learning that muting the microphone when not speaking is essential. As is ensuring it is muted and turning off the camera during breaks.

How voting is handled especially in full council.

6. Do you feel that you are given enough break times during meetings?

If not, what do you think is a reasonable time between breaks?



Comments:

90 minutes.

Staring at a screen is a tiring experience. I think a minimum of 10 minutes between sessions is essential.

Shorter meeting talk time and regular breaks, every 45 minutes there's a 5 minute breath.

No. even when its my own loo I have to dash and there still isn't time to put the kettle on as well!

Finish by 8pm.

It's incredibly tiring making sense of spoken word. Sometimes I realise I'm concentrating so much on understanding what's being said I realise I've lost sense of what is being said. I only need 1 speaker to not be clear and then I'm playing catch up.

Sometimes the meeting goes on for more than 2 hours before a break time.

Enough break times.

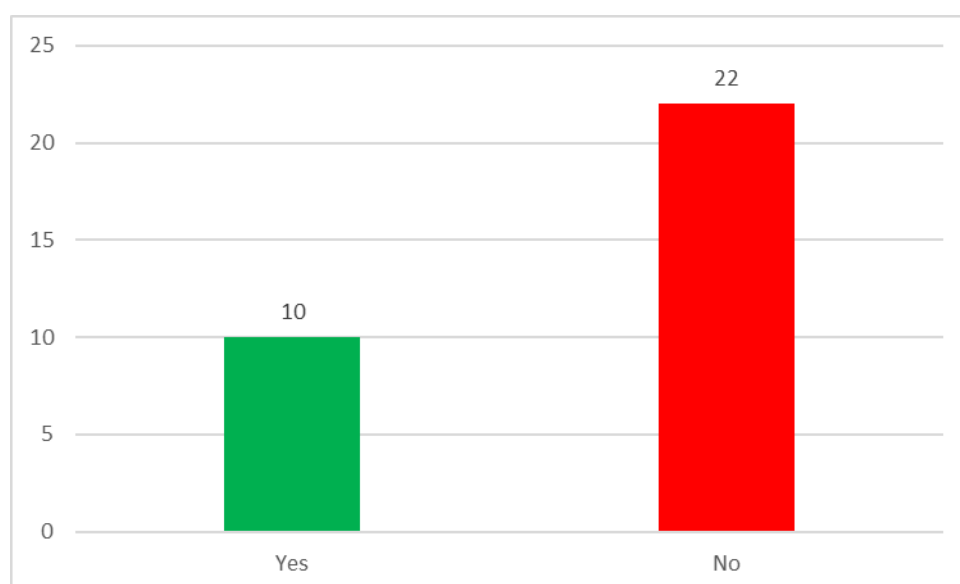
A 10 minute break should be sufficient. Although perhaps a 30 minute break during a very long (4 hour meeting) would enable participants to eat supper/dinner/tea.

Rather have 5 minutes every hour than longer less often.

Length of agendas need to better reflect the concentration and endurance of members. Evening meals seem to be a thing of the past . I often have 4 evening meetings per week.

Q7. Currently the maximum meeting time allowed is four hours, do you feel that is appropriate for remote meetings?

If not, what should the maximum meeting length be?



Comments:

3 hours quite enough, except perhaps for Full Council.	3 hours max.	No, unlimited and on chair and committee discretion.	No meeting, whether real or virtual should last more than 2 hours.
This is a non-issue.	I think 3 hours should be the limit.	I believe four hours is too long staring at a screen, even with breaks. I would suggest a maximum of three hours with at least one break.	Types of meeting should have a target ideal. Many meetings should be no more than an hour. Committee meetings of any kind should be no more than 3.
I think that 3 hours should be the maximum. Its very hard to concentrate for 4 hours on a video call.	No. This is much too long to be sat at a computer. Perhaps 2 hours would be sufficient.	We should be considering indicative timings for items on long agendas which will help give people an idea of whether we are running ahead or behind schedule and if there'll be a rush to meet a deadline.	It's not ideal. Four hours is really too long, but I understand that the roll call for votes is the main factor that lengthens meeting times.
It all depends on what is being discussed but if meetings are too long then it makes it difficult to concentrate.	I really don't think any meeting should last longer than two hours as even with breaks.	Far too long - 2 hours. Cut the waffle and just get the business done.	Exhausting, not only for the hearing impaired but those that struggle with vision.

Q8. If you chair a committee or panel, are there any particular challenges that you face performing that role in a remote meeting?

Comments:

I don't chair a CBC meeting but do chair others (eg CBH) and find the challenge is to keep a number of balls in the air; particularly spotting who wishes to speak in a meeting of 24+.

I am not chair of any meetings, although I would think the chairperson has to be very alert.

Noting break times, reading the room on whether formal votes are necessary or not. Having to keep attention to several things during the meeting (speaker, hands up in the participant pane, any interjections or potential connection issues).

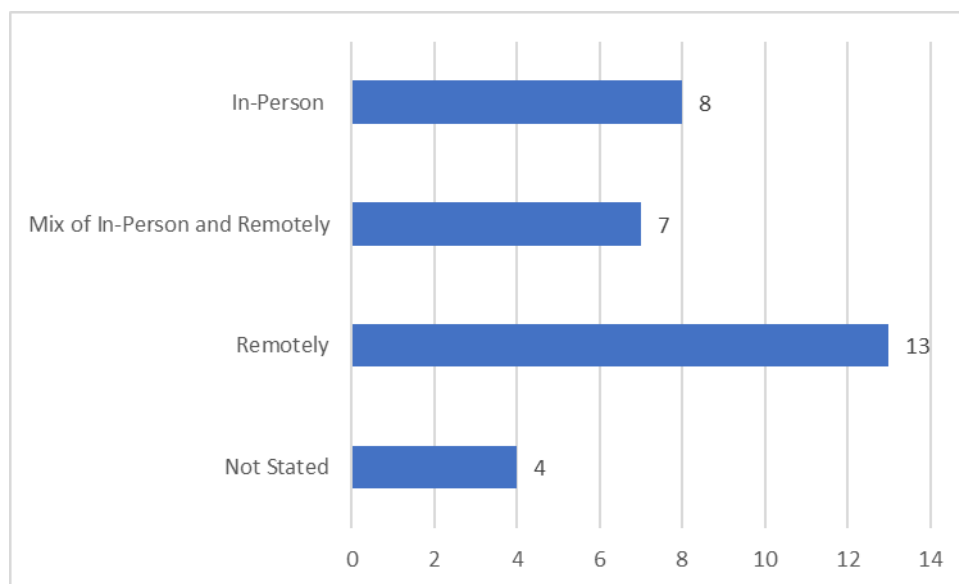
Not really - but I have to use two computers - one for the electronic papers and one for the Zoom call because flitting between two screens can be difficult while still trying to chair the meeting.

No, all ok.

Meetings too long.

The democratic services staff have been excellent. So no.

Q9. How do you think future meetings should be conducted?



Comments:

We should meet in-person for crucial, important meetings but others could continue remotely.

I believe the Council ought to now return to the Town Hall and Rowan House. When Members and Officers can meet together, democracy will be better served. Virtual meetings ought to now be restricted to occasional training sessions, if essential.

As they are until it is safe to return to normal public meetings.

As now. But a firm reminder of meeting disciplines, hands etc and a mandatory break at 90 minutes unless the meeting is close to an end.

Would like to see an element of remote meetings kept long term - maybe hybrid enabling people who cannot attend physically to still participate (attendance by Councillors has gone up and substitutions down) and briefings etc could be kept online.

As many as possible should be conducted virtually. Certainly ALL briefings. Cllr's and officers should be afforded the opportunity of attending physical meetings 'virtually'. For example visiting Cllr's to Planning Committee could be given a 10min warning that their slot is approaching, giving time to prepare, attend and leave the meeting. A process which up until now has taken a considerable amount of time (driving in, parking, sitting through a plethora of applications until yours is reached,

a sensible mixture of online/real as far as is possible in covid-19 scenario.

In-person with option to dial in, especially if visiting and especially for briefings.

Q10. Are there any other general issues or concerns, relating to remote meetings, that you would like to raise?

Difficult for members with families to attend a meeting without interruptions. Also it is difficult when things like phone calls or people coming to the door occur. Members would either have to ignore the call or leave the meeting for a time and therefore miss what other members have said.

I think we should carry on remote meetings but have physical meetings peppered in.

I think, frankly, that they have worked pretty well, and hats off to those as who have organised and sorted them out - at pretty short notice. I would like the facility to have a copy of what i've said here, please (!) Roger Buston.

A strain on eyes and concentration, meetings too long and no interaction with others in the meeting, difficult to read agenda notes and look at screen.

Lower public attendance.

Meetings are too long.

No, but there may be issues around the ability of the public to access meetings that we need to understand.

They do allow flexibility around attendance and are an easy way for the public and expert witnesses to participate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the various staff and officers who have worked hard to ensure the remote meetings flow as smoothly as possible.

Making sure officers and members put over a good image on camera.

If these are to continue in the longer term, we might want to consider using different types of formal and informal virtual meetings. For example, it would be interesting for the Cabinet to have a meeting that was entirely Have Your Say, answering questions from residents.

Just to thank the democratic services team for their efforts so far.

Zoom is feeling the strain and is overloaded. Last night's meeting was breaking up.

It feels less democratic in terms of the public. Although I do appreciate they can tune in, there is no immediate feedback. We don't like heckling but it's the fastest way to get feedback.



Remote Meetings Questionnaire

Officers

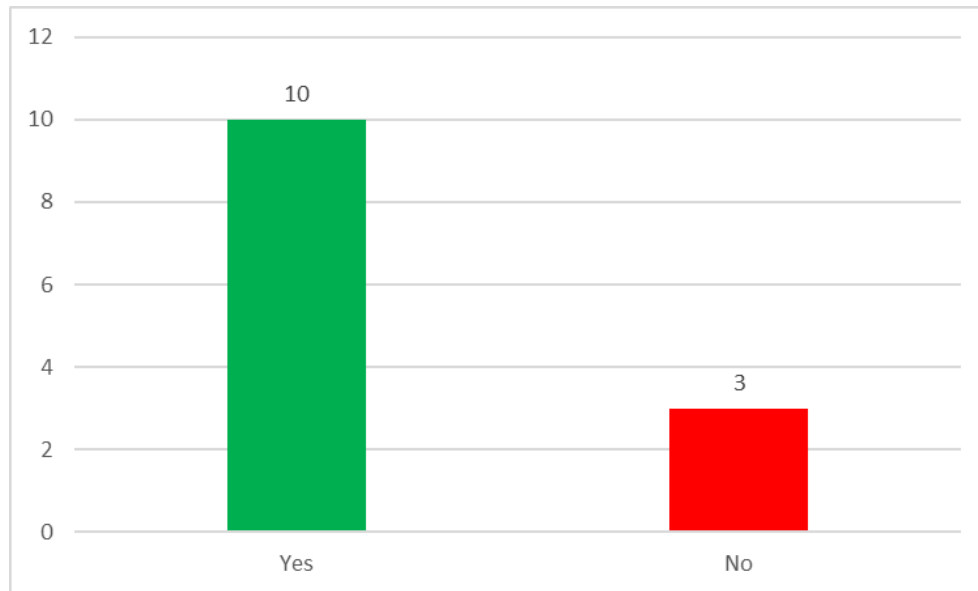
Introduction

Since May 2020 following the Covid-19 Coronavirus lockdown, Colchester Borough Council has been conducting committee meetings on-line.

Now that all committees have met on-line, at least once, Officers were asked to provide their views on how they have found the process, and if they have any suggestions on how remote meetings can be improved going forward.

Q1. Do you have the right equipment to enable you to fully participate in remote meetings?

If not, what do you feel would help you?

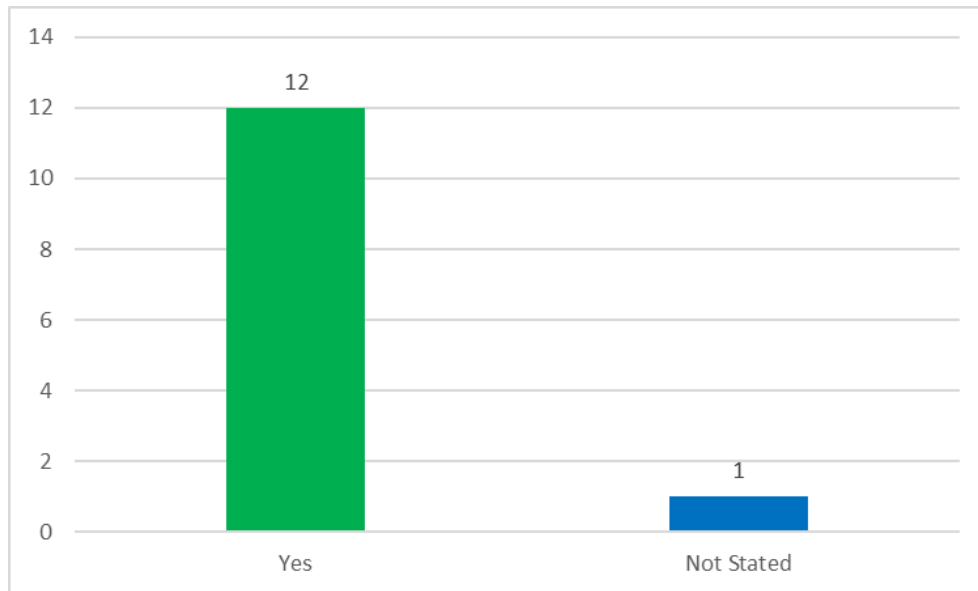


Comments:

Now I have a new laptop I do.	I am currently using my phone to do Zoom meetings; it would be far better to download zoom on to my cbc device.	Yes but these are all personal equipment, not CBC equipment.
I have appropriate equipment (although it is my own and not CBC).	Some colleagues still have Wyse boxes!	A CBC LAPTOP! For presenting at committee I will need to have two screens, one for the webcam and another for documents/notes.
Equipment fine - wifi sometimes iffy but that is my problem!	Yes but reliant on having laptop for Teams/Zoom and desktop for documents. Laptop has failed a couple of times.	Not really if it is on ZOOM.

2. Do you feel that you have received sufficient training to be able to participate in remote meetings?

If not, what further training do you feel that you need?



Comments:

Happy with the training I received.

Yes but refresher training would be useful as I am attending less remote meetings due to the change in delegation.

I'm wondering whether Members have access to the online sharepoint area for training? If they do, some general zoom training would be good to go on there (and also for officers).

Training should be targeted at those who are struggling to use the technology (some Members and Officers seem to have a more difficult time). I believe there is an enabling officer in IT now - I know they are busy but targeted training is helpful and they could be used for this type of training.

Yes - Mandy Chidgey did a great session before her retirement.

Yes - well supported by Democratic Services - thank you!

Q3. What do you feel are the benefits and disadvantages of remote meetings?

3a. Benefits:

The answers to this question have been grouped into the below themes:

Better focus on planning issues and less political group actions.

For planning committee I find the IT much better at home - SharePoint on the iPad via HDMI to a TV in the Council Chamber always felt one step from simply not working. It works well at home.

Less officer time, faster resolutions, information is quicker to obtain, easier to prepare for, better for the environment (i.e. not required to attend Town Hall).

Time efficiency (no travel time)
Sharing documents on screen ensures that these can be seen clearly by all involved

Brings better discipline in terms of debate and discussion. Allows those who cannot be physically present to participate remotely.

Decision making based on merits rather than members being swayed by presence of large crowd. Increased delegation so committee can focus on important matters.

You get to deal with the issues at hand

Huge benefit in not having to travel, saving in fuel and time, and kinder where meetings are held at more antisocial hours. Could be played back if any doubt over proceedings.

More viewers - arguably better participation and more democratic recorded for Members of the public / officers.

Don't get home so late.

Less formality - time to eat before evening meetings for eg. as no travel
No travel and less opening of buildings - carbon reduction and corporate savings on energy As AD it means I can be available but not have to sit in the room for every meeting (if an item is presented).

3b. Disadvantages:

The answers to this question have been grouped into the below themes:

Less personal contact and informal conversations before and after.

Public feel less engaged and that meetings are less accessible.

Voting takes longer by needing a roll call.

Not much atmosphere online. Contentious applications generate a tension that's hard to match when they are heard in the Council chamber. Pure electricity on your Thursday night!

Very tiring (more so than face-to-face meetings)

Difficult to forget relationships.

Unable to have informal, 'off-line' conversations to build relationships and catch-up.

The heckling, the chanting, the ominous/angry looks from objectors. I can live without it though.

Meetings more informal and not as well structured as the usual interjections from officers to clarify matters and keep the meeting moving are harder to do - you can't catch the Chairman's eye over zoom.

Not being able to pick up on body language.

IT/internet errors (if they occur).

Lack of physical contact and interaction means some of the more informal communication between participants does not take place.

No way of cutting off if people go too far.

Unable to control background noise.

Difficult when only attending for one agenda item and are waiting to be called. I waited for 1hr and 45 minutes sitting at my screen and was then advised I could stand down.

Work station is in a family room and difficult to use if attending a evening session. Family are unable to watch TV etc

4. Do you feel that there are any areas of remote meetings that could be improved?

I think Democratic Services have done a brilliant job in such a short timescale - I think they are responsive and pro-active and work incredibly hard in some very difficult situations.

Voting process could be made more dynamic.

Making sure that you the meeting is run progressively and in a timely manner. Improving all the time i.e. removing public speakers at appropriate time.

Enabling/providing staff to have faster internet connection would be an improvement; Ensuring staff have large screens so that documents/plans can be viewed clearly and all/most attendees of the meetin

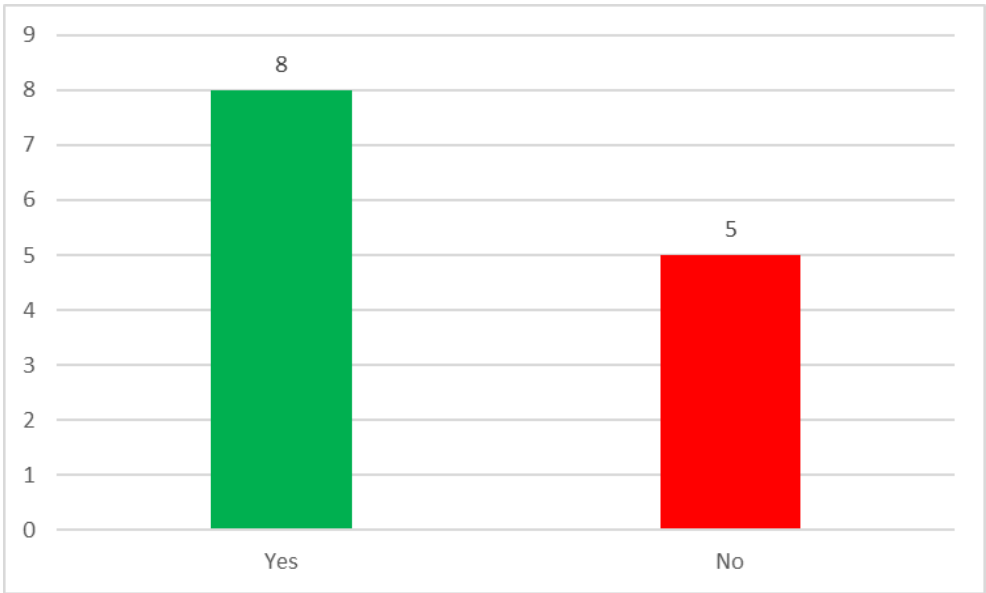
I think they work well.

It works perfectly well if chaired properly.

Limit member comments/questions to a maximum of two individuals before officer allowed to respond.

Q5. Do you feel that you are given enough break times during meetings?

If not, what do you think is a reasonable time between breaks?



Comments:

Reasonable breaks have been given during planning committee meetings.

Need break after two hours

2 hours

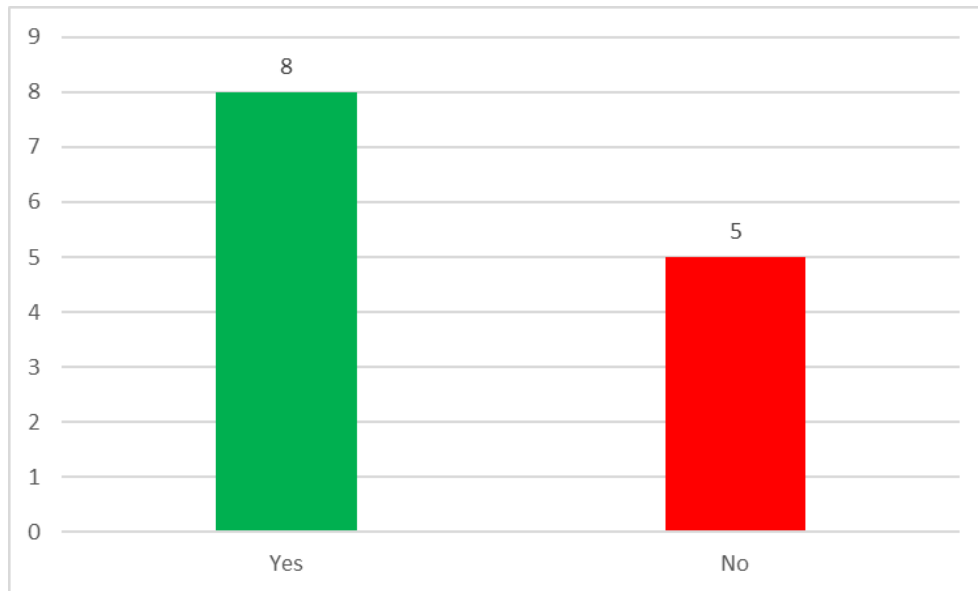
No - you need at least 10 minutes break between meetings days when I have 4/5 meetings I am exhausted.

Breaks are usually judged by the agenda item or around 8pm which isn't always the best time.

We don't tend to break in our meetings as they are generally hearings.

Q6. Currently the maximum meeting time allowed is four hours, do you feel that is appropriate for remote meetings?

If not, what should the maximum meeting length be?



Comments:

- It depends on each case but four hours with a break seems reasonable to me.
- 4 hours is a considerable time, although Planning Committee meetings can be longer (as a necessity if there are a number of applications to discuss and deliberations are extensive) - 5 hours should cover this.
- Dependent on the topic/subject and breaks permitted.
- I think 4 hours is sufficient.
- 3 hours including breaks would be preferable. Remote meetings are hard work/tiring especially after a full day's work.
- Yes, four hours is plenty.
- No longer than 4 hours.
- 3.5 - with a break
- I can handle 4. Any more would be a push though.
- I haven't had a four hour meeting yet but I would think this is too long.
- There is likely to be a break within the 4 hours. I have had training sessions on screen for 4 hours and this has been a max.

Q7. If you present or advise a committee or panel, are there any particular challenges that you face performing that role in a remote meeting?

WIFI dropping out!

Just ICT - worry that something won't work or connection will be lost and the need for either hard copies of documents (which isn't ideal) or another device.

Working from home and having home commitments/distractions. Also, the working environment at home is a little cramped so not overly comfortable for a long meeting.

Advising the chair privately can be quite challenging - perhaps the protocol should be that all chairs/advising officers must have a WhatsApp group to facilitate

No - I find it easy. If it's a PPT, I think as long as you liaise with the Democratic Services Officer to ensure you've decided who's driving the PPT then it should be fine.

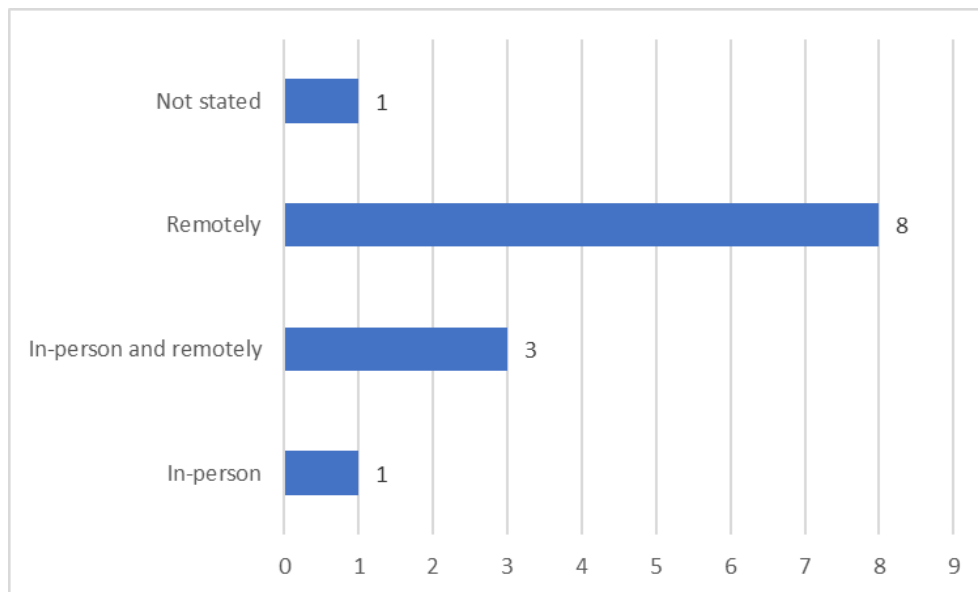
It is difficult to catch the Chairman's eye, and to engage with other officers individually.

Not being able to communicate with colleagues (other than by text or Teams chat) is a little difficult - queries are more difficult to resolve.

The protocols around being able to speak or contribute when presenting slides on Teams, as the presenter you are unable to see reactions or notifications.

When waiting to be called to present. You do not join the meeting the usual way and are only required for one item. This is fine if your item is first but more difficult if you are further down the agenda. You have no idea if the meeting has started or if it is over running whether you will be called in the next 2 minutes or the next hour, you just sit waiting anxiously.

8. How do you think future meetings should be conducted?



Comments:

Licensing Hearings would be better conducted in person than over Zoom. The level of informality afforded by a virtual platform is not ideal in appeal cases and hearings where outcomes can be appealed to court and people's livelihoods depend on the proper consideration of all matters.

Ultimately, remote meetings are likely to be more efficient for attendees (due to reduced travel time etc) and more accessible for the public (as they can view online), but the working practices are quite difficult in my role at Planning Committee.

A mixture of online and town hall.

Online/virtual is definitely the best choice.

If you are waiting to be called you should be advised that the meeting has started, the time when you are expected to be called, if the meeting is over running and the new time.

Evening meetings are definitely better for officers online as they have often had a full day of meetings anyway. I think a combination would be ideal.

All online. It's the future.

9. Are there any other general issues or concerns, relating to remote meetings, that you would like to raise?

Some attendees need to be aware that they have to be able to familiarise themselves with the technology fully - both the hardware and software - before taking part.

Staff need the equipment urgently, the roll out of laptops has been far, far too slow.

Publicity and notifications need to be automated for the public.

Colchester Borough Council

Remote Meetings Protocol

1. Introduction:

The following guidance is intended to provide Councillors with useful information to assist with navigating new ways of working, and in particular preparing for and attending remote meetings. Information considered to be of specific use to meeting Chairs is highlighted separately to form a useful quick reference guide.

2. Meeting location and paperwork:

The time of meetings, together with agenda documents, will be published on the Council's website. Instructions on how to access the meeting remotely will also be provided. www.colchester.gov.uk

Councillors will be notified of a remote meeting by an Outlook invitation, with the meeting password sent separately in a different Outlook invitation for security purposes. The invite will contain links to all relevant papers and to the meeting itself, to enable Councillors to join as participants as opposed to observers.

3. Preparing for the meeting, practical arrangements

These steps are particularly important for participants in meetings viewable by the public, but also apply to any others.

- Substitutions: Where you will be represented by a substitute, as much notice as possible should be given to Democratic Services, with details of who will be substituting as soon as this information is known, and at the least by midday on the day of the meeting. This will enable any necessary arrangements to be made to ensure that all Councillors who will be members of the Committee meeting may be accommodated and are in receipt of the correct meeting paperwork.
- Please note that due to logistical difficulties, it will not be possible to make printed agendas available for any meetings. If printed copies of paperwork are required then you will need to make the necessary arrangements to provide these yourself.
- Try to ensure that you are joining the meeting from an area in the home where you are less likely to be disturbed, and pay particular attention to anyone else in the area who may be able to overhear parts of the meetings – in particular any confidential or exempt from publication items that may form part of the meeting;

- Turn off noise sources such as television and radio and ensure that any smart speakers are turned off (Amazon Echo, Google Home etc) as they could turn on or inadvertently record the meeting.
- Try to ensure that the broadband connection is sufficiently stable to join the meeting. If your connection has low bandwidth, you may find it helpful to reduce the number of users or other devices that are using your broadband connection, turning them off for the duration of the meeting. You might find it easier to join using your mobile phone's data allowance, or if absolutely necessary by making a voice-only call – instruction on how to do this will be provided with the email inviting you to the meeting.
- Try to ensure that your background is as neutral as possible (a blank wall is best), and that it contains no political slogans or posters. Even if the option is available to you, you should resist the temptation to change your background to an idyllic beach scene!
- Your name will be shown onscreen if you are appearing in video; all Councillors are asked to ensure that their name is in the same format, for example 'Councillor Mark Cory', to enable members of the public to identify easily who is a Councillor and who is an Officer, and to recognise Councillors they may not have seen before.
- Before joining the meeting, double check to make sure that your camera is positioned to provide a clear, front-on view of your face. This may involve thinking about lighting in the room you're in (for example, sitting in front of a window may plunge your face into shadow). It may also involve putting your webcam, laptop or tablet on top of a couple of books so that you can look into the camera face on. Carry out a test or preview of your display before joining the meeting;
- Try to take an opportunity to practice with the functions of the software you are using to access the remote meeting. Guidance notes will be provided in a separate document, but if you have any concerns or worries, please contact Democratic Services before the meeting. Of key importance during a meeting will be the ability to mute and un-mute your microphone, and to indicate to the Chair that you wish to speak.
- Where possible, arrange to use a headset during the meeting rather than the speaker and microphone built in to your device. Not only will the quality of your audio be dramatically improved, but audio quality for all participants will be also. This is of particular importance should anyone participating have a hearing issue.
- Try to ensure that you aim to 'arrive' at the meeting no later than 15 minutes before it is due to start. In this way, there will be an opportunity to address and resolve any technical issues.

- Keep the contact details of Democratic Services Officers who will be facilitating the meeting handy so that you can contact them with any issues that you may have attending the meeting easily.
- Please give some extra thought into any input that you wish to have into the meeting, having read the meeting papers through carefully. If you wish to speak or ask a question, you may wish to contact either the Chair or Democratic Services before the meeting so that your intention to speak can be noted and will be addressed in the meeting. You may wish to liaise with individual Officers prior to the meeting to seek clarification on any points in reports you feel necessary, and which may assist with concise delivery of the relevant report. You will also have the option of indicating your desire to speak during the meeting itself by utilising the 'raise hand' function of the Zoom software – for security reasons, the meeting 'chat' function will be disabled.
- Having considered the agenda document, Councillors should also give careful thought as to any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests that they may have to declare in relation to any agenda items. Any such interest should be communicated to Democratic Services as soon as possible, so that any arrangements necessary can be made to ensure that the meeting runs as smoothly as possible. This may include excluding you from the vote on any particular item or arranging for you to be removed from the meeting altogether (in the case of a disclosable pecuniary interest) and invited to re-join once the relevant agenda item had been dealt with.
- Try to make sure that you are as physically prepared for the meeting as possible, so that you will be comfortable throughout the meeting. This is particularly important as it may be some time before the meeting finishes or there is a break in the agenda.

Because of the nature of remote meetings, they tend to run much longer than meetings that are carried out in person, and so additional preparation before the meeting is key to ensure that business is conducted in as focussed and efficient manner as possible, but still with full consideration of the pertinent issues.

Chair information:

- You should liaise with the Democratic Services Officer with the conduct of the meeting in plenty of time before the meeting is due to start – ensuring that you have a list of all attendees that you are expecting to be present, together with a list of Councillors who have indicated that they wish to speak or ask a question, or any who may need to declare an interest in an agenda item.
- Ensure that, where appropriate, you have the means to be contacted outside the meeting in the event of any failure in the broadcast or technical issues meaning that the meeting is no longer quorate.
- Be familiar with the functions offered by the software being used to broadcast the meeting – particularly the muting capacity of the software.

4. During the meeting:

The Chair, at the beginning of the meeting, will explain the protocol for member and public participation and the rules of debate, and Councillors will be asked to introduce themselves. The Chair's ruling during the debate will be final.

Councillors are asked to adhere to the following etiquette during remote attendance at a meeting:

- ✓ Councillors should be careful to not allow exempt or confidential papers to be seen in the video-feed.
- ✓ Councillors should have their microphones muted when not talking.
- ✓ Only speak when invited to by the Chair.
- ✓ Only one person should speak at any one time.
- ✓ Turn on the microphone and also the video-feed (if available or unless speaking to a diagram, presentation slide or drawing), then state your name before you make a comment.
- ✓ When referring to a specific report, page, or slide, mention the report, page, or slide so that all Councillors have a clear understanding of what is being discussed at all times.
- ✓ Ensure that your mobile phone is set to silent mode.
- ✓ Don't make comments about other Councillors or Officers during the meeting, even if you believe that your microphone is muted.
- ✓ Refrain from smoking during the meeting – this is prohibited by the Council's Constitution.
- ✓ You should also try to avoid eating or drinking during the meeting unless this is necessary and can be done discretely. Although being held remotely, meetings are still formal and should be treated as though they were being held in person, with the same expectations of appearance and behaviour. Although it is easy to forget, given the nature of the meeting, Councillors will still be on public display throughout, potentially to a wider audience than would normally be in attendance at a physical meeting.
- ✓ Councillors and Officers should introduce themselves before they speak, particularly if only attending the meeting via an audio link.

- ✓ As remote meetings are new to both Officers and Councillors, please be patient during the meeting as some processes may take a little longer than usual – you will still get your chance to speak.

Chair information:

- At the start of the meeting, read out the introductory statement, and advise all Councillors that their microphones will now be muted.
- Ensure that Councillors are introduced to the meeting, and Officers introduced with their job titles when speaking.
- Remain vigilant throughout the meeting to those indicating their wish to speak on an item by physical gesture or by using the 'raise hand' function.
- When inviting a Councillor to speak, remind them to unmute their microphone (if necessary).
- Ensure that everyone who wishes to speak has done so at the end of each agenda item and before moving to the vote. It is good practice for the Chair to pause at this point to give any Councillor who wishes to comment further a chance to do so – they may have to unmute their microphone etc.
- Ensure that any vote taken during the meeting is done so clearly, by making a roll call of Councillors present and asking them to confirm their vote, and ask the Democratic Services Officer to confirm the voting.
- The Chair will be in control of the meeting, and will invite input where necessary in accordance with indications received either in advance of, or during the meeting.
- The rules around breaks apply to remote meetings too, and breaks should be utilised to promote greater concentration, particularly during longer meetings.
- Where it becomes apparent that a Councillor has lost connectivity, the Chair will pause the meeting for a brief time to enable reconnection to take place. Where this is not possible, consideration will need to be given to adjourning the meeting for a longer period of time – this will be essential if the meeting is no longer quorate.

5. Review

This Protocol will be kept under review by the Monitoring Officer and will be revised in the light of experience in consultation with the Group Leaders.

LENGTH OF MEETINGS 1 June 2019 – 4 September 2019
1 June 2020 – 4 September 2020

MEETING	DATE 2019	DURATION hours: minutes	DATE 2020	DURATION hours: minutes
Full Council	17 July	2:36	15 July	4:01
			12 August	1:31
Average		2:36		2:46
Cabinet	5 June	0:55	1 June	3:05
	10 July	1:37	8 July	3:10
	4 September	3:13	19 August	1:45
			2 September	2:37
Average		1:55		2:39
Policy and Public Initiatives Panel / Policy Panel	19 June	1:15	17 June	1.54
	31 July	2:15	5 August	1.13
Average		1:45		1.34
Governance and Audit	25 June	1:59	23 June	2:28
	30 July	1:01	28 July	0:59
	3 September	1:41		
Average		1:33		1:44
Scrutiny	11 June	2:55	1 June	3:05
	16 July	1:50	7 July	3:10
	6 August	2:17	21 July	2.24
	28 August	2:23	27 July	1:12
			17 August	2:56
			18 August	3:56
Average		2:21		2:47
Local Plan	22 July	4:12	14 July	2:45
			24 August	3:16
Average		4:12		3:00
Planning	13 June	2:54	17 June	2:31
	4 July	4:19	9 July	1:15
	25 July	0:56	30 July	2:54
	15 August	2:20	20 August	1:17
Average		2:37		1:59
Licencing	28 August	0:37	10 June	0:32
			11 August	0:18
Average		0:37		0:25
NEPP	20 June	2:00	25 June	2:32
Average				
Average over all meetings	2019	2:10	2020	2:18

Governance and Audit Committee

Item
10

20 October 2020

Report of	Assistant Director Corporate and Improvement Services	Author	Matthew Evans ☎ ext. 8006
Title	Work Programme 2020-2021		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the current Work Programme 2020-2021 for the Governance and Audit Committee. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year. Members will note that three items, reports on the Annual Audit Letter 2019/2020, the Audited Statement of Accounts 2019/2020 and Annual Audit letter and the Treasury Management Report 2019-20 have been moved from this meeting to the next meeting of this Committee in November. This is because the external auditors had not been able to complete the audit in time for the submission of these reports.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the Work Programme for 2020-2021.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Work Programme of this Committee is kept under review throughout the municipal year to ensure that business is progressed and Members have the opportunity to review upcoming agenda items.

4. Alternative Options

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

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Governance and Audit Committee deals with the approval of the Council's Statement of Accounts, audit, other miscellaneous regulatory matters and standards.
- 5.2 The Committee's Work Programme will evolve as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each

meeting the opportunity is taken for the Work Programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances.

6. Standard References

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

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 Governance 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.
- 7.2 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self-governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21

Governance and Audit Committee
Meeting date / Agenda items -
Governance and Audit Committee - 23 June 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft Annual Statement of Accounts 2019/2020 2. Year End Internal Audit Assurance Report 2019/2020 3. Review of the Governance Framework and Draft Annual Governance Statement 4. CCHL – Annual report
Governance and Audit Committee - 28 July 2020
Governance and Audit Committee briefing followed by the following items -
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of Governance Framework and Draft Annual Governance Statement 2. LGA Consultation on a Model Code of Conduct for Councillors

3. Review of digital meetings following Covid-19
Governance and Audit Committee - 8 September 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Colchester Borough Homes Annual Report and Governance Statement 2. Financial Monitoring Report – April to June 2020 3. Capital Expenditure Monitor 2020/2021 4. 2019/2020 Year End Review of Risk Management
Governance and Audit Committee - 20 October 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review 2019/2020 2. Health and Safety Policy and Annual Report 3. Review of digital meetings following Covid-19
Governance and Audit Committee – 24 November 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of the Council's Ethical Governance Policies 2. Annual Review of the Members' Code of Conduct and the Council's Localism Act "Arrangements" 3. Review of Local Code of Corporate Governance 4. Review of Member/Officer Protocol 5. Gifts and Hospitality – Review of Guidance for Councillors and Policy for Employees 6. Treasury Management – Half Yearly Update 7. Annual Review of Business Continuity 8. Equality and Safeguarding Annual Update 9. Annual Audit Letter 2019/2020 10. Audited Statement of Accounts 2019/2020 and Annual Audit letter 11. Treasury Management Report 2019-20

Governance and Audit Committee - 19 January 2021

1. Interim Review of the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan
2. Risk Management Progress Report
3. Mid-Year Internal Audit Assurance Report 2020/2021
4. CCHL Half-Year Performance Report
5. Annual Review of the Council's Companies' Business Plans

Governance and Audit Committee - 23 March 2021

1. External Audit Plan for year ending 31 March 2021 and Certification of Claims and Returns – Annual Report 2019/2020
2. Financial Monitoring Report
3. Capital Expenditure Monitor 2020/2021
4. Internal Audit Plan 2021/2022