

## **Council Recovery Programme (Covid-19)**

This summary gives a brief update on the delivery of the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Programme.

The Recovery Action Plan agreed by the Council in September was divided into 4 'cell' areas of Economy, Council, Customer and Community and contained objectives and activities associated with recovery focusing on the Medium Term (July 2020 to April 2021). Cross cutting themes of Housing, Finance, Climate Change, Sustainability and commerciality (represented through work with the Council's companies) are facilitated by the programme structure; activity relating to the priorities in these areas are woven through the fabric of the Recovery plan.

Most actions in the Covid-19 Recovery Plan are being incorporated into the Strategic Plan Action Plan and will be fully incorporated into the SPAP from April 2020.

Recovery is continuing to be closely monitored and managed through existing Programme Structure and Framework, principally through cell Project Managers

To avoid duplication with the SPAP summary highlights from the Recovery Plan activity are highlighted below:

### **Economy**

- The Town Deal (Town Investment Plan) bid for £25, has been submitted to government and is focused on improved youth provision, public realm enhancements (Town Centre and Gateways, Greenstead), digital hubs, 5G and physical infrastructure (walking, cycling, liveable neighbourhoods and school streets), to in turn mitigate the climate emergency. Accelerated additional funding of £1m has already been approved by government for 2 public realm schemes at Balmerne Gate and St Nicholas Square.
- There continues to be a focus on rebuilding the economy to be stronger in future through partnership working; funding for business support and advice to Colchester Business Enterprise Agency (Colbea) and developing a dashboard of business intelligence indicators.
- Development of a range of opportunities to ensure the economy is greener and more inclusive, such as working with ECC (Essex County Council) to support implementation of the 'Safer, Greener, Healthier' transport initiative and rollout of the e-cargo bikes project is being rolled out.
- Stimulation of the local economy and markets is also being achieved through construction and re-opening of Mercury Theatre, review of the whole 'social value' system of procurement to encourage local suppliers and development of a case for funding of a new centre for digital and creative businesses in Queen St 'Queen St Grow on' facility.
- Work with the Our Colchester Business Improvement District has continued to facilitate economic recovery of the town centre through their Town Centre Task Force. This includes work planning for re-opening and plans for enhanced marketing on social media and through a variety of channels. This includes funding of over £160K this year to contribute to permanent and temporary public realm improvements, such as the installation of 'Parklets' in the High Street (public seating platforms that convert curbside parking spaces into community spaces) and a plan for new metal arch signs for 'the lanes' area of the town centre.

## **Council**

- Performance of re-opened services has been closely managed and monitored. When the last lockdown was lifted, the period from July to the end of October was much more promising than anticipated for Colchester Castle with demand up to 70% of normal capacity during some periods which bucked National and Regional trends.
- Services are being delivered under government guidelines, whilst adhering to Covid-19 restrictions. Some services have been forced to close under the current government lockdown and staff have been redeployed to support other critical services. Preparations are being made to reopen when the lockdown ends on 2 December 2020.
- The Governance and Audit Committee considered a report following a review of remote Council Meetings and have made several recommendations for consideration by Full Council in December. If accepted, these will further improve virtual meetings.
- Delivery against the Strategy to generate income and savings to deliver a balanced budget in 2021/2022 is being closely monitored. Formal consultation has been launched with staff who would be at risk of redundancy because of the proposals. A public consultation on the Budget Strategy has also been launched.

## **Customer**

- Our website continues to be updated regularly to provide current and urgent information, help and support for residents, businesses and communities. The site also includes a signpost to the budget challenge and the impact that Coronavirus has had on CBC and Colchester as a whole.
- We continue to create digital platforms and use our social media channels for our businesses and residents who have lost out financially due to the pandemic. We will continue to be ready to react to any changes and our teams remain focused and prepared to distribute these to eligible residents and businesses as swiftly as possible.
- We carried out a customer survey to help shape and develop the reinstatement of our in person services. We are continuing to work with our partners to secure a town centre presence for residents who are unable to access our services from home.

## **Community**

- Many One Colchester Partners are once again working on Covid 19 related activities linked to both the lockdown (supporting CEV) and impacts of the pandemic (hospitals). For CBC in relation to communities this includes ongoing compliance activities, community response activities, supporting PHE with planning for mass vaccination and mass testing.
- Workforce planning across the health system is a key part of recovery that includes new apprenticeship programmes and initiatives to both attract new entrants to the workforce but also motivate, support and retain existing resources and remains a big feature of the recovery activities.
- Recovery Objectives and work towards them are being built into draft Communities Strategy, which is being designed as a One Colchester document and is not in the final draft stages.
- We are continuing to work closely with partners to enhance working practices; mitigate economic disruption and isolation; improve health and wellbeing and strengthen volunteering/civic engagement.

- CBC Digital Access Team presented at One Colchester Delivery Board on 22 Oct. Integrated Commissioner for Digital Services at ECC is now part of the One Colchester Digital Working Group.
- Mercury Theatre have developed a Wellbeing and Resilience Programme to be rolled out from winter 2020 onwards, which will target both schools and older people at risk of isolation.
- C360 Asset Mapping on track and will be presented to Alliance Board in December (and disseminated to others around then).
- We have received a contract from ARU for the next stage of the research into assets in NE Essex. Awaiting confirmation of payment from CCG to enable us to get this signed off.
- C360 have sent a survey re volunteering in local communities to all ward cllrs.

### **Climate Emergency**

- Climate Emergency has been embedded into project reporting, as well as achieving a higher profile through partners including One Colchester.
- E-Cargo bikes have been distributed within the Council and local businesses, along with a review of in-person services aimed at reducing paper use and travel.
- Key activities so far that have successfully embedded climate emergency thinking within recovery plan include: - Embedding climate emergency into project reporting - Presenting information at One Colchester Strategic Board on climate change - to set up sub-group of organisation on climate change as a result - eCargo bikes distributed within Council/businesses - soft launch soon - Reviewing of in-person services - Will influence paper use, travel etc