

Extract from the draft minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 2 September 2020

494. Better Colchester Strategic Plan 2020-23

The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Cory, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, introduced the Better Colchester Strategic Plan 2020-23. As a consequence of the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic the Council needed to review its strategic priorities to ensure they remained relevant focused on the needs of the borough's residents. It remained ambitious and inspiring. There were five key themes:-

- Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability;
- Creating safe, healthy and active communities;
- Delivering homes for people who need them;
- Growing the economy so everyone benefits;
- Celebrating our heritage and culture.

Tackling the climate challenge remained the biggest challenge and sustainability ran through all the other priorities. The focus on safe, healthy and active communities would help tackle inequalities, whilst prioritising the economy would ensure that the borough was well placed to bounce back from the impact off Covid 19. The value of arts and heritage had been demonstrated during the Covid 19 pandemic where arts organisations had helped communities stay safe and entertained.

Councillor Higgins, Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services, highlighted the work the Council was undertaking in conjunction with partners to improve cycling and walking provision within the borough. Councillor J. Young, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Performance, stressed that the Council would help arts organisations with their national portfolio funding applications for funding. Continued support and investment in the arts was vital for the local economy, as the arts and heritage sector supported 7000 jobs and attracted tourism into the borough

Councillor King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, stressed the importance of growing the economy and ensuring all residents benefitted from the resulting growth. The impact of the pandemic on the local economy must not be underestimated and the full effects had not yet been felt. Support for the economy would encourage investment in Colchester. The borough needed to be confident and be prepared to adapt to the new environment.

Councillor Fox, Portfolio Holder for Housing, stressed that the Council was using its powers to borrow to invest in housing, particularly affordable housing. He was proud of the Council's work in providing new Council housing and improving sheltered accommodation for the elderly. The Council was working to provide sustainable communities at Northern Gateway and through the Tendring/Colchester Garden Community.

Councillor Lilley, Portfolio Holder for Communities, Wellbeing and Public Safety, highlighted how well Colchester's communities had reacted to the Covid 19 pandemic. Volunteer groups and third sector organisations such as Community360 had worked together with the Council to support communities and minimise the impact on the vulnerable. In terms of public safety, significant improvements to the CCTV network were planned.

Councillor Cory thanked Pam Donnelly, Strategic Director, Customer and Relations, and Lucie Breadman, Assistant Director, Communities, for their work with One Colchester through the pandemic, which had helped support residents, particularly the most vulnerable. The Council would be able to build on this work as it delivered its strategic priorities.

RESOLVED that the Strategic Plan 2020-23 be agreed.

RECOMMENDED to *COUNCIL* that the Strategic Plan 2020-23 be adopted and included in the Policy Framework

REASONS

To enable the Strategic Plan to be adopted and included in the Policy Framework.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The current Strategic Plan expires at the end of 2020-21 but does not reflect significant new priorities agreed by the Council as part of setting its budget strategy and Medium-Term Financial Forecast. Crucially the current Strategic Plan does not reflect the unanimous decision by Full Council to declare a Climate Emergency or the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A new plan is required and needs to be adopted by the Council. The absence of a relevant Strategic Plan would create a significant risk of the Council failing to identify and deliver on its core priorities.