

Cabinet Meeting

**Grand Jury Room, Town Hall, High Street,
Colchester, CO1 1PJ
Wednesday, 12 April 2023 at 18:30**

The Cabinet deals with the implementation of all Council services, putting into effect the policies agreed by Full Council and making recommendations to Full Council on policy issues and the budget.

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COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Cabinet
Wednesday, 12 April 2023 at 18:30

Leader and Chair	Councillor King (Liberal Democrats) Councillor Cory (Liberal Democrats) Councillor Cox (Labour) Councillor Fox (Labour) Councillor Goss (Liberal Democrats) Councillor Luxford Vaughan (Liberal Democrats) Councillor Nissen (Labour) Councillor J. Young (Labour)
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AGENDA
THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING
(Part A - open to the public)

Live Broadcast

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

[\(107\) ColchesterCBC - YouTube](#)

1 Welcome and Announcements

The Chair will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chair will invite all Councillors and Officers participating in the meeting to introduce themselves.

2 Urgent Items

The Chair 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.

3 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 registerable interest or non-registerable interest.

4 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Cabinet will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 are a correct record.

08-03-23

9 - 20

5 **Have Your Say! (Hybrid Cabinet Meetings)**

Members of the public may make representations to Council meetings on any item on the agenda or any other matter relating to the business of Council. This can be made either in person at the meeting or by joining the meeting remotely and addressing the Council via Zoom. Each representation may be no more than three minutes. Members of the public wishing to address Council remotely may register their wish to address the meeting by e-mailing democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk by 12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting. In addition, a written copy of the representation should be supplied for use in the event of technical difficulties preventing participation at the meeting itself.

There is no requirement to pre-register for those attending in person.

6 **Decisions Reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel**

Cabinet will consider the outcome of a review of a decision by the Scrutiny Panel under the call-in procedure. At the time of the publication of this agenda, there were none.

7 **Strategy**

7(i) **End of Year Update**

21 - 36

Cabinet will consider a report providing an end of year update to Cabinet on key areas and priorities for the Council.

7(ii) **Town Deal Progress**

37 - 40

Cabinet will consider the recommendation made by the Scrutiny Panel at its meeting of 15 March 2023.

8 **Culture and Heritage**

- 8(i) **City Status Update** 41 - 46
Cabinet will consider the recommendation made by the Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 15 March 2023.
- 9 **Resources**
- 9(i) **Financial Monitoring Report April - December 2022** 47 - 50
Cabinet will consider the recommendation made by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting of 7 March 2023.
- 10 **Planning and Infrastructure**
- 10(i) **Review of Section 106 Developer Contributions** 51 - 52
Cabinet will consider the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel at its meeting of 14 March 2023.
- 11 **General**
- 11(i) **Progress of Responses to the Public** 53 - 54
Cabinet will be invited to note the progress of responses to members of the public who have addressed meetings of Cabinet and Council under the Have Your Say! provisions.
- 12 **Exclusion of the Public (Cabinet)**
In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example 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)

13 **Housing and Communities - Part B**

13(i) **Report of Urgent Decision taken under Rule 22 of the Cabinet Procedure Rules – Land Acquisition for Development as Part of the Council's New Housebuilding Programme**

Cabinet is invited to note an urgent decision taken by the Leader of the Council in respect of the acquisition of land for development of as part of the Council's new housebuilding programme.

CABINET

8 March 2023

Present: - Councillor King (Chair)
Councillors Cory, Cox, Fox, Goss, J. Young

Also in attendance: Lilley*, Lissimore*, Pearson, Smith, Willetts

* Attended remotely

729. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 25 January 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

730. Have Your Say!

Councillor Lilley attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet to offer his congratulations to all involved in the visit by His Majesty King Charles III. He also expressed his concern about the continued flooding in the Hythe. The Hythe Taskforce had made some progress and a solution using a pump had been proposed. The Fire Service could retain the pump and use it elsewhere when needed. The balance of the funding required should be sought from partners. All other options would cost too much and take too long. The Leader or the Chief Executive should reinstitute the Hythe Taskforce and use it as a vehicle to obtain the necessary funding to implement this solution.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, expressed his thanks for the comments in respect of the royal visit which had been a great success. Responsibility for addressing the flooding lay elsewhere and the Hythe Taskforce had not been established by the Council, although it had contributed towards it. However, he was happy to look at what could be done to refresh the Group but it was unlikely that its membership and remit would remain as before.

Pam Donnelly, Chief Executive, was invited to respond and explained that the Council's approach now was to bring together partners both internally and externally to address intransigent problems. She would review where the Council was on this issue and see how it could be approached differently. She would contact Councillor Lilley direct.

Councillor Fox, Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation, endorsed the comments made about the primary responsibility for the issue lying elsewhere. The Taskforce had made real progress early on in identifying the problem and potential solutions. It had been harder to implement solutions as the Council did not have statutory powers to compel partners or agencies to undertake the necessary work. Essex County

Council had prepared a business case to the Environment Agency for more work to prevent the valves silting up. Section 106 funding from developments at the Hythe had also been allocated to address the issue which could potentially be used to help fund the pump. It was hoped that the Member of Parliament would continue to engage on the issue.

Councillor J. Young, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities, explained that this was part of a wider problem through the failure of Anglia Water to adopt the drainage system in the Hythe. The section 106 funding had come from the Beyond the Box application as a measure of goodwill and should be used to help fund a solution. It was beholden on the parties involved to try and find a solution to help residents and businesses.

731. Decisions Reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel – Review of Saturday Household Drop Off Service

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

Councillor Willetts, Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet. He reiterated that the Scrutiny Panel was acting as a critical friend of the executive and was not looking at whether the specific decision was wrong or right but whether the decision complied with the constitution, budget and Strategic Plan. In respect of this decision the Panel had two main concerns. In terms of consultation, the Panel's view was that the Council aimed for good communication with residents and put in considerable effort to achieve this. On this occasion however, no consultation had been undertaken or was planned. The Panel's view was there needed to be a Cabinet policy on consultation, especially in relation to the second tier of decisions which may have a more limited impact. Whilst it could be argued this was an issue of common sense or judgement, a policy would help prevent differences of opinion, as in this case.

In addition the Panel was concerned that there may be unintended consequences from the decision in terms of increased flytipping. The Portfolio Holder's analysis of this issue was missing from the decision and needed to be explained.

Councillor Lissimore, lead member on the call in, attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Panel. As there had been no consultation it was difficult to assess the impact of the decision. In order to assess whether flytipping would increase, residents needed to be asked what they would do instead. In addition, the consequences of the proposals to charge for garden waste also needed to be taken into consideration.

Councillor Smith attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Cabinet to advise Cabinet of the minority view of the Scrutiny Panel. He considered this had been a poor example of scrutiny. The Panel had divided on party lines and it had not been conducted in a conducive atmosphere. Only 1% of the population used the service, and it would be difficult to identify service users as they were not a particularly defined geographic group. In addition the Chair had not allowed questions as to how Essex County Council had approached consultation on a waste related issue to be answered.

In response the Chair of Scrutiny indicated that the Panel had been scrutinising a Colchester City Council decision and Councillor Lissimore had been present in her capacity as a City Councillor. If the Panel wished to scrutinise decisions taken by other authorities, it could do so but as a separate item.

In response to questions from Cabinet members as to whether the Council had a policy or guidelines on the circumstances in which consultation on executive matters should be undertaken, the Chief Executive undertook to look at the issue with the Council's Research and Engagement Team.

Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, explained that in 2022 the Household Waste Drop Off Service operated over 24 weekends at 45 community locations. On each occasion it used on average four vehicles visiting three locations and the service was used by approximately 120 people. In terms of average tonnage the vehicles would receive 3.66 tonnes of black bag waste and 1.08 tonnes of garden waste. This needed to be seen in the context of the average capacity of a waste vehicle of 10-12 tonnes. Much of the black bag waste was material that could be recycled. The proposal had been included in the budget and had been agreed as part of the programme of cost savings. The decision had been fully scrutinised and he had given a fact based robust response. In terms of the concerns on flytipping no figures or data had been given in support of the argument that this would increase, Data showed that flytipping was decreasing, and a new company, Wise, had been commissioned to take a more robust approach to enforcement against flytipping.

It would be difficult to identify service users to consult with them. Essex County Council had been consulted on the proposal but had not responded. There were other options open to residents such as charity shops, many of whom would collect, or arranging lifts to the recycling centre or arranging specialist collections from low cost waste carriers. A number of residents drove to locations to take advantage of the service: this journey could be made direct to the recycling centre. The service was paid for through overtime, which meant that it was a particularly costly service.

In view of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel and other representations made about the service, Councillor Goss indicated that he was proposing an alternative way forward. This would meet the objective of securing a budget saving whilst leaving in place a service for those areas most in need of the service. The proposal was data led and was based on information provided by the Research and Engagement Team who had identified the areas of highest deprivation and lowest income. This could be delivered at a cost of £7,218.90, which achieved about two thirds of the original saving.

Based on the strict criteria, the service would be delivered at the following locations:-

Greenstead

Hawthorn Ave (Opposite Forest Road)
Hawthorn Ave (Community Centre)
Juniper Way (Garage Area)

Berechurch

Queen Elizabeth
Wethersfield

Maple Way

Old Heath & the Hythe

Barnhall/Stalin Road
Speedwell Road

Shrub End

Littlefield Road

New Town & Christ Church

Port Lane
Barrington Road
Winnock Road

Highwoods

Chinook

St Anne's & St Johns

Brinkley Crescent
Goring Road

Tiptree

Walnut Tree Way

Stanway

Wheatfield Road

Shrub End

Coats Hutton

Rural North

Mount Bures
Lexden Road (West Bergholt)
Parsons Field (Dedham)

In discussion, Cabinet members indicated that they supported this constructive solution. It showed that the concerns expressed had been listened to and acted upon. Thanks were expressed to the Scrutiny Panel for its helpful recommendation. In terms of consultation Cabinet considered it would be useful to look at the issue in more detail and particularly as to whether guidance or policy was more appropriate. The Chief Executive's offer to examine this matter was welcomed. Consulting with ward members was particularly important.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) A Saturday Household Drop Off Service continue to be provided at the following locations only:-

Greenstead

Hawthorn Ave (Opposite Forest Road)
Hawthorn Ave (Community Centre)

Juniper Way (Garage Area)

Berechurch

Queen Elizabeth
Wethersfield
Maple Way

Old Heath & the Hythe

Barnhall/Stalin Road
Speedwell Road

Shrub End

Littlefield Road

New Town & Christ Church

Port Lane
Barrington Road
Winnock Road

Highwoods

Chinook

St Anne's & St Johns

Brinkley Crescent
Goring Road

Tiptree

Walnut Tree Way

Stanway

Wheatfield Road

Shrub End

Coats Hutton

Rural North

Mount Bures
Lexden Road (West Bergholt)
Parsons Field (Dedham)

(b) The Chief Executive investigate the possibility of guidelines or policy defining the circumstances in which consultation should be carried out in advance of decision making by the Executive.

REASONS

Where the Portfolio Holder does not accept a recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel following a call in, the decision is referred to Cabinet to determine.

The proposal agreed met the objectives of achieving a financial saving whilst maintaining a service for those most in need.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It was open to Cabinet to confirm the original Portfolio Holder decision.

732. Colchester Strategic Plan 2023-26 Delivery Plan

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

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, introduced the report and explained that this was a significant piece of work. It would fill the gap between the Strategic Plan objectives and the delivery of the objectives. It would provide the linkages between ambition and delivery and indicate funding where this was required beyond what was allocated in the core budget. This approach had been recommended by the Local Government Association Peer Review Team. The Strategic Plan objectives had been underpinned by a public consultation exercise with over 1100 responses and considerable cross party working.

In discussion Cabinet members highlighted that the Delivery Plan fleshed out how Strategic Plan objectives would be delivered and funded. It balanced ambition and vision and allocated practical resources to delivery. It was important to ensure that the Delivery Plan was implemented. The following elements of the Delivery Plan were highlighted in particular:

- Working with partners such as the BID and the North Essex Economic Board to deliver projects such as the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Delivering the City Centre masterplan and Town Deal projects.
- Addressing the needs of those who were homeless or on the Council's Housing Needs Register.
- Working with partners on the cultural offer, to celebrate heritage and to tackle inequality.
- Community Safety

RESOLVED that the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2023-2026 be agreed including the allocation of Strategic Plan Delivery Reserve and the transformation funding to deliver against the Strategic Plan Goals.

REASONS

To ensure delivery against the Strategic Plan 2023-26 including the allocation of appropriate resources.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It is essential that an adequately resourced delivery plan is in place to ensure delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan. There are a range of actions that could deliver against the

Strategic Plan but the proposed actions represent those that deliver most effectively with the available resources. The action plan can also be reviewed throughout the year if alternative actions emerge.

733. Devolution and Proposals for North Essex Authorities

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Pearson attended and with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Cabinet. He noted it was International Women's Day and welcomed the gender balance of Cabinet. He also expressed his thanks to councillors, officers and partners for the work behind the successful royal visit which had helped put Colchester on the map.

The wider body of Councillors had only recently been appraised of the details on the devolution proposals. There were some potential benefits to the Level 2/3 proposals, such as sustainable transport, more affordable housing and a more joined up approach on health and wellbeing. However, moving forward the approach needed to be cautious and inclusive. To ensure that Councillors were kept on board it was vital they were kept appraised of developments. It was also important that it was acknowledged there were some potential pitfalls as well as benefits. The financial benefits were not a panacea, given the length of the deal and the scale of proposed Greater Essex.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, welcomed the comments which went to the heart of the matter. There were potential benefits and an opportunity to take control of services currently administered by central government. It was an opportunity to address how inefficient and fractured local government could be and deliver better services to residents through greater local control of areas such as transport or skills. Discussions so far had been positive and the approach would continue to be inclusive. The Leader of Essex County Council remained committed to listening to the views of all the districts. Some devolution deals had delivered a sum significantly greater than £30 million per annum, but the real benefit was through improvements to ways of working and governance, rather than the funding. Strong relationships were in place and that should give some confidence to members. No final decision was being taken at this stage. What was being sought was agreement to continue discussions.

Councillor Fox, Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation, emphasised the need to ensure Councillors were kept on board and the importance of keeping residents informed. It was the duty of Councillors to try and mould any deal to ensure it benefitted local residents. Whilst there might be some disquiet about some of the structures that were proposed, there were real opportunities. Other deals had led to improved public transport provision which would be a real benefit for Essex. It would also be an opportunity to address the issues of skills development. It was important to contribute to the debate in order to have any influence on the final outcome.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, indicated that he shared some of the scepticism on the basis of his previous experience. The introduction of a Mayor, particularly of a wide area, was likely to concentrate power rather than dilute it. However he appreciated there were positives and that talks should continue. Councillor Cox, Portfolio Holder for Heritage and Culture, indicated she was broadly supportive of the

principle and stressed the need for a simple communications initiative with residents setting out the potential benefits of devolution. However, it was important that local government was properly funded and given the resources to continue to provide services.

Pam Donnelly, Chief Executive, was invited to contribute and stressed that in discussions she and the Leader were committed to protecting Colchester's best interests. The work across North Essex Councils demonstrated in Appendix B of the report should give some comfort to members about the degree of strength there was across North Essex to get the most out of the opportunity devolution presented by working together.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet notes that it is not being requested to take a final position or decision on devolution.
- (b) Cabinet notes the contents of the Deputy Chief Executive's report.
- (c) Cabinet agrees to progress the current work taking place to the next stage.
- (d) To progress the work to the next stage, Cabinet agrees:
 - A. That the Chief Executives be commissioned to draft an ambitious devolution pitch to Government – this should rule out a Level 1 devolution deal but explore the options and benefits around a Level 2 and Level 3 devolution deal, noting that the most extensive powers and new investment are only available at Level 3 as set out in appendix A, p17/25.
 - B. That leaders meet to review the pitch document and agree the level of deal to pursue.
 - C. That at that meeting, leaders confirm the timing for submitting the proposals to open dialogue with Government.
 - D. That the high level approach to engagement set out on pages 13/21-14/22 of the report is correct.
 - E. That a standard factual briefing should be issued to MPs following this discussion, following up the briefing issued earlier in the year.
 - F. That a letter to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Secretary of State should be sent following this meeting from Councillor Neil Stock, leader of Tendring District Council, and upper tier leaders (on behalf of all leaders), setting out the basis of the Greater Essex leaders' collaboration, the work done to date, and next steps.

REASONS

In England, devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from national to Local government.

It is important because it would ensure that decisions would be made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect.

A key purpose of devolution is economic growth, jobs growth and skills development.

It would also enable efficient use of increasingly scarce resources across local authorities in Essex.

Devolution investment would also enable Colchester and its partners to compete effectively with devolution arrangements elsewhere in the UK.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were submitted to Cabinet.

734. Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)

The Strategic Director for Place and Client submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor J. Young, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities, introduced the report. The Council was proud to be a City of Sanctuary and the Council's work in support of refugees was strengthening over time. Colchester was pleased to welcome refugees from Afghanistan who had supported British troops on service, and there had considerable support from host families in Colchester to refugees from Ukraine. The Council had been identified by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as a Council who provided significant housing for refugees and the scheme provided funds to support that provision. The funding would provide housing for refugees and increase the stock in the longer term to address wider housing need in Colchester.

RESOLVED that the proposal for funding through the LAHF and the 'sign off' of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the LAHF be approved.

REASONS

To meet with the requirements of the LAHF allocation.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not to approve the proposal and sign off the MOU for the LAHF but this would mean that Colchester City Council would not receive any funding for this programme.

735. Request for Delegated Authority for the Award of HRA Contracts 2023/24

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

RESOLVED that for the award of the contracts for works within the Housing Investment Programme 2023/24. authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and

Communities.

REASONS

Within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Council owns almost 6,000 affordable homes, benefitting people in need of social housing. The housing stock is managed through an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) and each year a number of maintenance contracts are managed within an agreed Housing Investment Programme. This keeps these homes in a suitable condition, as part of an ongoing planned approach set from the HRA Asset Management Strategy and 30-year HRA Business Plan.

Contracts that are due to expire over the next year, require new contracts to be procured and awarded for the Housing Investment Programme in 2023/24. These are contracts that are likely to require Cabinet approval due to estimated costs (over £500k for the scope of the contracts, over multiple years) and borough-wide span.

The decision to delegate powers to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities to approve the award of these contracts, as they arise, will make those awards smoother and faster if they arise between Cabinet meetings scheduled for the next year, or during the pre-election period. This avoids delays in the delivery of improvements for tenants. A similar decision was taken in 2020, 2021 and 2022 and has demonstrated the success and benefit of this approach in past/current contract awards.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not to delegate the powers requested; but this would then need contracts to be individually reported to Cabinet for each contract award increasing the time and resourcing required, for a procurement process that is already heavily scrutinised and regulated. This would delay the start of contracts, and therefore the improvements to homes for tenants, whilst waiting for a Cabinet meeting to arise. The time/benefit balance would therefore suggest that delegation to the Portfolio Holder would be more effective and efficient use of Council resources, without introducing risks; demonstrated by recent practices. The Portfolio Holder decisions would remain available for call-in should individual concerns arise.

736. Request for Delegated Authority to Award Recycling Materials Contract

The Group Manager, Neighbourhood Services submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that authority to award the recycling materials contract be delegated to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste subject to a successful and compliant tender process.

REASONS

The current contract for the transfer, treatment and disposal of source segregated municipal dry recycling is due to end on 31st July 2023 following an optional extension to

the contract of 12 months in 2022 and therefore a new contractual arrangement needs to be put in place. Due to the timing of the tender process and the end of the contract, it is requested that delegated authority be given to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste to award the contract between Cabinet meetings to ensure there is no break in service.

The contract will ensure that the Council is fully compliant with its waste management responsibilities.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not having a contract in place would see the Council operating at odds to the financial rules and put at risk the financial budgets, resilience, environmental objectives and delivery of the Council's operations, therefore it is not an option to source recycling services without a tender process and implementation of a contract.

737. Climate Change Policy – Policy Panel Recommendation

Minute 66 of the Policy Panel meeting of 11 January 2023 was submitted to Cabinet, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, thanked the Policy Panel for its helpful recommendation which resulted from a thoughtful discussion. It was a demonstration of the value of the Panel for engaging with Councillors on emerging issues.

RESOLVED that Cabinet work with the Environment and Sustainability Panel to identify if gaps remained in the Council's approach towards meeting its targets relating to fighting climate change and, where identified, to identify how best to address them.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not to agree to the recommendation from the Policy Panel.

738. Procurement - Direct Award Contracts for Merchant Services and Water Supply

The Group Manager, Customer, submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED:-

(a) To direct award a 4-year contract (with option to extend) under the TPA-01 Banking and Finance Framework Agreement - Lot Number 2 – Merchant Services to Lloyds Bank Cardnet.

(b) To direct award a 4-year contract under the NEPO311 Framework Agreement for

the provision of Water Retail Services to Anglian Water (Wave).

REASONS

Switching merchant services will provide the Council with lower transactional fees when processing card payments.

Entering into a contract for the Council's water supply would provide a small annual saving on cost, as well as the free installation of water meters on all sites.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

To remain with the current merchant services provider.

To not enter into a contract for the Council's water supply.

739. Progress of Responses to the Public

The Democratic Services Manager submitted a progress sheet a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Cabinet noted that the reference to Vitamin B in respect of Steve Kelly's contribution should be to Vitamin D.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Progress Sheet be noted.

REASONS

The progress sheet was a mechanism by which the Cabinet could ensure that public statements and questions were responded to appropriately and promptly.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were presented to the Cabinet.

740. Thanks

Councillor King explained that a further meeting of the cabinet may be scheduled for April. However, in case that was not necessary, he thanked Cabinet members and officers supporting Cabinet for their contributions during the course of the municipal year, Real progress had been made.

Report of	Chief Executive	Author	Richard Block Richard.block@colchester.gov.uk
Title	End of Year Update		
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This meeting is the final Cabinet meeting in the 2022/2023 municipal year. This report provides an end of year update to Cabinet on key areas and priorities for the Council.
- 1.2 Updates and proposed next steps are provided which will ensure Cabinet can provide oversight and direction to ensure the continuation of Council business during the election period until the first meeting of Cabinet in the new municipal year in June 2023.
- 1.3 The report will also ensure any incoming Cabinet has a clear understanding of the status of the Council's key priorities allowing a seamless transition into the new municipal year.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To consider progress against key Council priorities and areas of work in the 2022/2023 municipal year and the proposed next steps.
- 2.2 Identify any further action required to ensure the continuation of delivery and a smooth transition into the new municipal year.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To ensure satisfactory delivery of key Council priorities and a smooth transition into the municipal year 2023/2024.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There are no appropriate alternative options.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 2022/2023 has seen the initiation and continuation of the delivery of significant areas of work and priorities for the Council. This is against a backdrop of the most challenging financial conditions in recent memory.
- 5.2 Key priorities, the key challenge, achievements, and next steps are outlined below. This will ensure any incoming Cabinet has a clear understanding of the status of these and ensure a seamless transition into the new municipal year.

Budget and Medium-Term Financial Forecast

Challenge

- 5.3 2022/2023 has been a challenging year to manage the in-year budget due to service pressures, a cost-of-living crisis, inflationary pressures and a significant in-year pay claim. The scale of the financial pressures is demonstrated by the 5 largest areas of cost pressure shown below:

Cost Pressure	Description
740K	Neighbourhood Services staff costs
700K	In year pay award
492K	Sport & Leisure inflation and other service pressures
359K	Less Planning Income
191K	Corporate building pressures

- 5.4 The 2023/2024 budget has also been the most challenging budget to balance in recent memory due to the same external factors. This is at a time of post pandemic financial recovery and after successive years of previous budget reductions and associated efficiency programmes. The Council faces a budget gap of £6.95M in 2023/2024 which is more than a quarter of the controllable revenue budget.
- 5.5 The ambitious capital programme has also come under exceptional pressures, from supply chain and construction difficulties, delays and inflation. This was reflected in one of the key recommendations arising from the Local Government Peer Challenge to review the capital programme.
- 5.6 Significant challenges have also been experienced in progressing the audit of previous end of year accounts due to nationally reported issues with resources in external audit firms.

Achievements

- 5.7 Despite facing multi-million pound in-year budget pressures, the most recent forecast budget outturn position is for a £434K net overspend through a programme of in year savings and increased interest earnings. Further work will continue to identify ways to mitigate the net 22/23 overspend with the aim of ending the year on budget.
- 5.8 Work has been undertaken throughout the year to deliver a balanced budget for 23/24 including several cross-party budget workshops and the Leader's budget alumni meetings. A total of £5.25M of savings along with the use of £1.7M of reserves have been identified to deliver a balanced budget for 23/24.

5.9 The review of the Council's Capital Programme is also nearing completion.

Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan

Challenge

- 5.10 The Strategic Plan sets the priorities for the City and the Council for the next three years. The current Strategic Plan was published in March 2020 and runs to March 2023.
- 5.11 The key challenge for 22/23 has been to continue delivery against the existing plan whilst developing a new plan for 2023 to 2026 against a difficult financial backdrop and a requirement for organisational and service change.

Achievements

- 5.12 Despite the challenges significant delivery has been demonstrated against key strategic aims identified by Cabinet in June 2023. This includes significant and sustained help to residents most vulnerable to the cost-of-living crisis. Work has been undertaken with partners to provide many hundreds with financial help, support or advice, as well as support to the foodbanks and those helping others. Further details are provided at appendix 1.
- 5.13 A significant "Future of Colchester" public consultation was conducted including a resident survey, focus groups and Policy Panel activity to inform a new Strategic Plan.
- 5.14 The resulting "City Fit for the Future" Strategic Plan recognises the significant transformation of Council services required to respond to future challenges and to provide high quality essential services.
- 5.15 The Strategic Plan sets the framework for the Council's 3 year Medium Term Financial Forecast. The plan also recognises that in the future it is even more important that the Council works with and enables other organisations to support delivery of key priorities for the city.
- 5.16 The Local Government Peer Challenge emphasised the need for a strong link between priorities and capacity to deliver. As such, a delivery plan for 2023/2024 based on capacity and resources was also developed and approved by Cabinet in March 2023.

Local Government Association Peer Challenge

Challenge

- 5.17 The Local Government Association peer challenge process provides independent and external improvement support and challenge through a peer review, conducted by a team of councillors and senior officers from other local authorities. It is expected that Councils undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge every 5 years.
- 5.18 Prior to 22/23, the previous peer challenge of Colchester City Council was conducted in June 2014.

Achievements

- 5.19 Colchester invited a peer challenge team to conduct a peer challenge during the week starting 26 September 2022.

5.20 The team deployed a hybrid approach with four days on site in Colchester but with some interviews conducted remotely. During this time, they gathered information and views from more than 45 meetings, in addition to further research and reading, meeting either virtually or in person with over 150 people across the period of the challenge.

5.21 Following the peer challenge the team issued a report with the key highlights including:

'With the opportunities afforded by their plans for growth, the new Member and Officer Leadership team and, most crucially, city status, the City Council and Colchester, the place is on the cusp of something great.'

Colchester City Council has good self-awareness and understands the communities it serves and the economy across the borough.

Colchester has an incredible heritage and culture offer that competes nationally and Colchester City Council has worked hard over the years to develop resilient and productive relationships and partnerships to ensure this heritage and cultural offer can thrive.

Colchester City Council is driven and has a strong desire for achievement and delivery, with fantastic people, including staff, councillors, and partners'.

5.22 The report also made 8 key recommendations and as a result an action plan was developed and approved by Cabinet. Delivery against the action plan is well underway with many relevant work streams referred to in this report.

City Status and Year of Celebration

Challenge

5.23 City Status didn't come with a pot of money, special tax breaks, or a magic wand but it does come with potential, further regional, national and international recognition, a sense of pride, positivity, and opportunity.

5.24 Our status as a city is deserved and one that will provide opportunities for all. Realising these opportunities won't happen in a single year or be limited to what the City Council does, it will be about how everyone works together to build on the strengths Colchester already has.

5.25 It will be about communities, businesses, the public and voluntary sector and especially our young people. It will be about our urban centres and our rural communities, our amazing heritage, culture and economy and the new and exciting modern city opportunities to come.

5.26 In place terms, City Status enhances our competitive position, which is important. There's a need to compete with other places for talent/skills, new business creation, relocations, and investment. Colchester has an excellent track record on inward investment having secured an identifiable £333.8m between 2015-2021.

Achievements

5.27 Maximising the benefits of city status is a key element of the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan referred to previously in this report. "Our Year of Celebration"

already includes over 20 events across the urban and rural areas and this keeps growing.

- 5.28 Commemorating the 375th anniversary of the Siege of Colchester has been planned and is going to be a real spectacle. Colchester City Tiptree Jam will be on sale at the Visitor Information Centre later in the year and Gladiators are coming to Colchester Castle!
- 5.29 A new marketing toolkit is helping to promote our Year of Celebration, and a collaborative marketing approach will bring together key Colchester organisations and leaders to help promote our City and all it has to offer.
- 5.30 A key highlight of the year was the recent successful royal visit which showcased the best of Colchester and provides a great start to the year of celebration.

City Regeneration and Renewal

Challenge

- 5.31 Colchester is changing as the way people work, shop and spend their leisure time changes. In common with places across the country, there has been a dramatic growth in e-commerce. With an expansion in the choice of leisure options and an increase in homeworking, city centres need to adapt to retain their vibrancy.
- 5.32 A key finding from the “Future of Colchester” public consultation was that residents have real desire for a vibrant City Centre and see this as a key priority for the City Council.

Achievements

- 5.33 In 2022-23, the Council collaborated with partners to develop a new Economic Strategy for the wider city. The strategy sets out high-level priorities for work to maintain and boost the strength of our economy.
- 5.34 During 2022-23 the Council worked with Essex County Council and partners to develop a comprehensive masterplan for the City Centre. This plan establishes a shared understanding of the area's strengths. It will discourage piecemeal activity, and instead lay the foundations for everyone to pull in the same direction.
- 5.35 Our Town Deal programme has secured £19m of government funding to boost Colchester's economy, create jobs, tackle inequalities, and make lasting improvements to our place.
- 5.36 2022-23 started with our submission of detailed business cases for each of the Town Deal's projects to government which were approved.
- 5.37 During 22/23 a considerable amount of planning and preparatory work has been carried out. Towards the end of the year this has started to transition into delivery, with work well underway to develop the new digital learning suite at the Wilson Marriage Centre, archaeology work completed at the Essex County Hospital and Digital Working Hub sites, a full Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for the project to bring Jumbo back into use submitted, and a successful HLF Expression of Interest to bring Holy Trinity Church back into use also achieved.

Levelling Up Fund

- 5.38 In 22-23 we built on our Town Deal work by bidding to the second round of the governments Levelling Up Fund. This bid was submitted jointly with Essex County Council and was for almost £20 million to make a long-lasting improvement to the St Botolph's area of the City Centre.
- 5.39 Our Levelling Up programme will regenerate a key part of our City Centre, making a long-lasting visual improvement to the public realm, kick-start quality car-free housing schemes which will bring a much-needed boost to footfall for City Centre businesses, reduce the anti-social behaviour currently experienced in this area, significantly enhance Colchester's heritage assets and its appeal to visitors, and improve the facilities for cycling and walking. We are now mobilising, with governance and management arrangements agreed.

Shared Prosperity Fund

- 5.40 To support the work of our partners to regenerate Colchester's economy, and to tackle inequalities, during 22-23 we submitted a successful investment plan to access funding for the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund. We were successful in securing £1.3m and have allocated this to a wide range of initiatives being led by partners in the public and voluntary sector to boost jobs, tackle inequalities, and improve life chances.
- 5.41 Some projects have started already with the rest beginning throughout 23-25. These include work to boost Colchester's vibrant creative sector, help for local people to access jobs in the construction and health sectors, support to enable more volunteering, and support for a new community supermarket providing low-cost food to help tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

Council Organisation Health and Leadership

Challenge

- 5.42 The work to redesign the Senior Leadership arrangements within the City Council has been driven by the demands of the post COVID 19 Pandemic-environment in which we operate, the financial challenges we must now confront following many years of budget cuts, the prospect of further reductions in our revenue budget, the uncertain global environment, and the changing needs of the people of Colchester.
- 5.43 This is set in the context of a rapidly changing workforce with hybrid working and flexible arrangements now established as business as usual, the pressing need to invest in the organisational development of our workforce, unmanageable workloads which need to be reduced and the drive to maximise the skills and experience of our existing people to provide attractive and rewarding career paths.
- 5.44 It is imperative that strategic and operational delivery capacity of our senior team is maximised at pace, to tackle the fundamental transformation challenges which lie ahead.

Achievements

- 5.45 Phase 1 of this work is complete with the establishment of the Senior Leadership Board which is shown at appendix 2. This has delivered a £200k saving and ensured that the strategic capacity and skills of the team are maximised and aligned with the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan.

- 5.46 Work on Phase 2 is underway; this Phase aims to extend the Senior Leadership Board arrangements to create an extended Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This new arrangement is already working in shadow form.
- 5.47 It is now necessary to formalise the arrangements to ensure we have clear and collaborative leadership arrangements in place, which will drive the delivery of the new Strategic Plan (2023/26) priorities and the resulting organisational changes which will ensue. To assist with this stage of the work design principles have been agreed.
- 5.48 Reference to these design principles has resulted in a draft operating model which will:
- play to our strengths as a team,
 - reflect the priorities of Colchester City Council as a key system player
 - recognise the system wide working environment in which we operate
 - deliver the opportunities being created by collaborative working arrangement across Essex and specifically North Essex
 - reflect the drive to create modern services for a modern City with enabled communities
 - mirror the requirement for transitional arrangements which will leave scope for the outputs of other work e.g. the review of CCHL which will reset our commercial operating model
- 5.48 The draft proposals are the result of extensive collaboration and co-design across the shadow senior leadership team and the teams affected by change. Full details of the operating model will be provided to Cabinet in the form of a presentation at the Cabinet meeting when this report is considered.

The Family of Council Companies

Challenge

- 5.49 A key recommendation of the Peer Challenge was to:
- “Commission an independent review of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd, and its subsidiaries, also undertake an internal review of Colchester Borough Homes to assess whether the companies are realising the benefits they were established to deliver.”*

Achievements

- 5.50 Cabinet responded swiftly and commissioned Risk Assessments of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd (CCHL) and Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) at the end of 2022. A full strategic review of CCHL and the subsidiary companies was commissioned in January 2023.
- 5.51 In response to the findings of the reviews for CCHL:
- An Interim Managing Director for CCHL has been recruited to replace the retiring MD and has taken up role in March 2023.
 - A new Oversight Board has been established to ensure that the CCC Executive, Chair of Governance and Audit Committee and Senior Team works together with the Chair and Managing Director of CCHL
 - Any changes to the Constitution required to address conflicts identified will be made at the Annual Meeting in May
- 5.52 In response to the findings of the risk assessment for Colchester Borough Homes, the Council was reassured by the substantial assurance found in terms of the Board's

effectiveness and organisational competency and is working with CBH on recommendations relating to strengthening the oversight of compliance requirements and reporting to the City Council Senior Board and Executive.

Key Partners and Partnership arrangements

Challenge

- 5.53 Colchester City Council has some extremely strong partnership arrangements, many in place over several years which enable significant scope and opportunities for input, insight and collaboration on key areas of work.
- 5.54 For example, as part of the commitment made in our respective Local Plans, Colchester City Council and Tendring District Council are working with Essex County Council to deliver a Garden Community on the borders of both Local Authorities
- 5.55 As outlined in this report there is transformational investment going into the City Centre over the next 4-5 years through the Town Deal Programme and Levelling up Fund. In addition, Colchester City Council and Essex County Council hold significant assets in terms of buildings and key pieces of land that can assist with the regeneration of the City Centre if appropriate partnership working is in place.

Achievements

Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community

- 5.66 A Joint Committee comprising the three Authorities was established with the first meeting in February 2022. This is the first Joint Committee of its kind in Essex with delegated authority to support the Planning process. Progress has been positive with a submission version Development Plan Document (DPD) prepared to take to public consultation in May 2023. A shared Planning and Programme Team is funded by the three authorities to provide the resource to progress the work.

Team Colchester

- 5.67 To ensure there is the strategic oversight and alignment of ambition and delivery of city centre regeneration, Essex County Council and Colchester City Council have formed a strong partnership in 'Team Colchester' where the Leaders of both councils and key Portfolio Holders come together to provide the steer. So far Team Colchester has:
- co-commissioned a Masterplan for the City Centre which is now being considered by the Local Plan committee for consultation and adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document
 - Secured in partnership Levelling Up fund investment into the St Botolph's area of the City Centre to tackle issues such as poor air quality, anti-social behaviour, lack of cycling and walking access and connectivity between rail, bus and active travel options.
 - Agreed shared investment to work towards a transport interchange in the medium term.

Other Key Partnerships

- 5.68 Key relationships have been formed or strengthened in other key areas:
- By joining the Key Cities network of leading non conurbation cities and engaging on the national stage

- By developing a Partnership Agreement with the University of Essex, to be signed shortly and by continuing to keep close to the Garrison, meeting our obligations under the Armed Forces Covenant
- By continuing to work closely with health and voluntary sector partners, through One Colchester and other forums, securing their help, funding and support, and assisting them in turn to address some of the most challenging issues of our times
- Through Greater Essex discussions, exploring the potential benefits of devolution
- Securing further cooperation and joint working with other local authorities, to help mutual cost efficiency and resilience

Summary of next steps and Conclusion

- 5.68 The 2023/2024 municipal year has been challenging with some of the most difficult financial challenges in recent history. However, significant progress has been made in responding to those challenges with a balanced budget set for 23/24.
- 5.69 The Council has a new Strategic Plan and a solid delivery plan backed up with effective partnerships and significant external funding to maximise the opportunities for Colchester.
- 5.70 A summary of proposed next steps for the areas described in this report is shown in the table below:

Priority/area	Next Steps	Date
Budget and Medium Term Financial Forecast	Delivery of savings approved through the 23/24 budget. Report to Cabinet and Governance and Audit on Capital Programme Review	Quarterly reports to Governance and Audit and Cabinet from June 2023 June 2023
Strategic plan/delivery plan	Closing report for 20-23 strategic plan Mid-year report on 23-26 Strategic Plan	July 2023 November 2023
Peer Challenge	Action plan update to Cabinet Follow up visit from Peer Team	June 2023 July 2023
City Status and year of celebration	Delivery of year of celebration with reports to Cabinet on progress	Throughout year with regular updates to Cabinet.
City Regeneration and renewal	Implementation of Economic Strategy Delivery Plan.	April 2023

	<p>Consult on the draft City Centre Masterplan plan ahead of formal adoption into Planning Policy.</p> <p>Start on site across various Town Deal Projects</p> <p>For the LUF start detailed engagement with communities and stakeholders, letting contracts, and conducting the detailed planning work necessary.</p> <p>Delivery of grants to improve shopfronts with the Business Improvement District.</p>	<p>June 2023</p> <p>Autumn/Winter 2023</p> <p>Throughout 2023</p> <p>Throughout 2023</p> <p>From May 2023</p>
Council organisation and family of companies	<p>Formal consultation with Group Managers impacted by changes.</p> <p>Implementation of new management arrangements</p> <p>Strengthened governance across the Family of Companies including regular meeting of the Chief Executives/Managing Director and Council Leader with the Chairs of Board.</p> <p>These will now be used to identify opportunities to strategically align, collaborate, reduce duplication and improve efficiency across the organisations.</p> <p>Richard Carr, the Interim Managing Director of CCHL will work with an oversight board to implement the outcomes and recommendations from CCHL review with updates provided to the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<p>April 2023</p> <p>June 2023</p> <p>April 2023</p> <p>March 2023 onwards</p>
Key Partnerships	Garden Community DPD will progress to Examination in	Examination in Public October / November 2023

	<p>Public</p> <p>Key infrastructure such as the route for the Rapid Transit System starts on site in North Colchester and the contract for the first phase of the Link Road will be placed</p> <p>Team Colchester will be used to deliver the ambitious city centre regeneration programme including the projects funded by the recent successful Levelling Up Fund bid.</p>	<p>Following Consultation and Submission over the Spring / Summer Comm 2023</p>
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6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 Consideration has been given to equality and diversity issues in respect of any decisions to implement the priorities set out in this report in line with agreed policies and procedures including production of Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The progress in this report supports all the core themes of the 2020 – 23 Strategic Plan and help set the platform for delivery against the new Strategic Plan from April 2023 onwards.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 There are no specific additional consultation considerations arising from this report.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There are no specific additional consultation considerations arising from this report.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no new financial implications associated with this report.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Much of the delivery detailed in this report will have a positive direct and indirect impact on, health, wellbeing and community safety.

12. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 12.1 Delivery against several of the priorities detailed in this report will also have a positive impact on environmental sustainability of both the Council and the Borough.

13. Health and Safety Implications

- 13.1 There are no direct health and safety implications associated with this report.

. 13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 The progress reported in this report will help to mitigate the risks facing the Council in delivering its strategic priorities for the borough.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Achievements against the strategic plan

Appendix 2 – Council senior leadership arrangements

Background Papers

None

Strategic Plan 2020 - 2023

COUNCIL AIMS AND WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO ACHIEVE THEM

Our three year Strategic Plan 2020-2023 sets out how the Council will address the key challenges facing the city through five themes. The plan (which can be found at colchester.gov.uk/strategic-plan/2020-23) sets out the key goals by which success will be measured moving forward. This year, under these five areas, we have achieved the following:

DELIVERING HOMES FOR PEOPLE WHO NEED THEM

- Continued to build new homes – but no more than we need. We are on track to deliver 880 new homes in 2022/2023 which is close to the Government’s target for our area of 920.
- Delivered 80 affordable homes through Registered Provider developments, Acquisition programme and Council new build properties from April 2022 to the end of December 2022.
- Seen the first homes built by our council company, Amphora Homes, to be sold on the open market and the delivery of 30 per cent affordable homes through Amphora Homes schemes.
- Work is underway to build the Leisure Park at Northern Gateway, a mix of community facilities, leisure and homes.
- Prevented homelessness for 163 households and supported 70 households into accommodation between April 2022 to the end of December 2022.

TACKLING THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE AND LEADING SUSTAINABILITY

- Reduced the council’s direct carbon footprint by 12.8% (791.5 tonnes of CO2e) and we remain on track for the council to be net zero by 2030.
- Now have 15 electric and hybrid vehicles as part of our drive towards a fully electric fleet by 2030.
- We have 7 electric vehicle charging points in council-owned car parks.
- Launched an all-electric Car Club to boost sustainable transport options for residents.
- Worked with Essex University on a project that uses Colchester oyster shells as a natural coastal defence and exhibited it at COP27 UN Climate change talks.
- Planted 14,000 trees and given away 15,000 trees/shrubs across the city as part of the Colchester Woodland and Biodiversity Project to help our wildlife and our environment.
- Making our air cleaner by continuing our CARless no-idling campaign, E-cargo bike project and support of the bikability scheme.

CREATING SAFE, HEALTHY AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

- Work with a range of partners to support residents through the cost of living crisis and ensure residents and businesses have information on grants and help and support available.
- Thousands of volunteers engaged and supporting communities by working with a wide range of organisations called the One Colchester partnership.
- Work with organisations including the Police and the One Colchester partnership to make sure the city centre is safe and welcoming during the day and night.
- Continuing to support refugees and those seeking asylum homed in Colchester, as a City of Sanctuary.

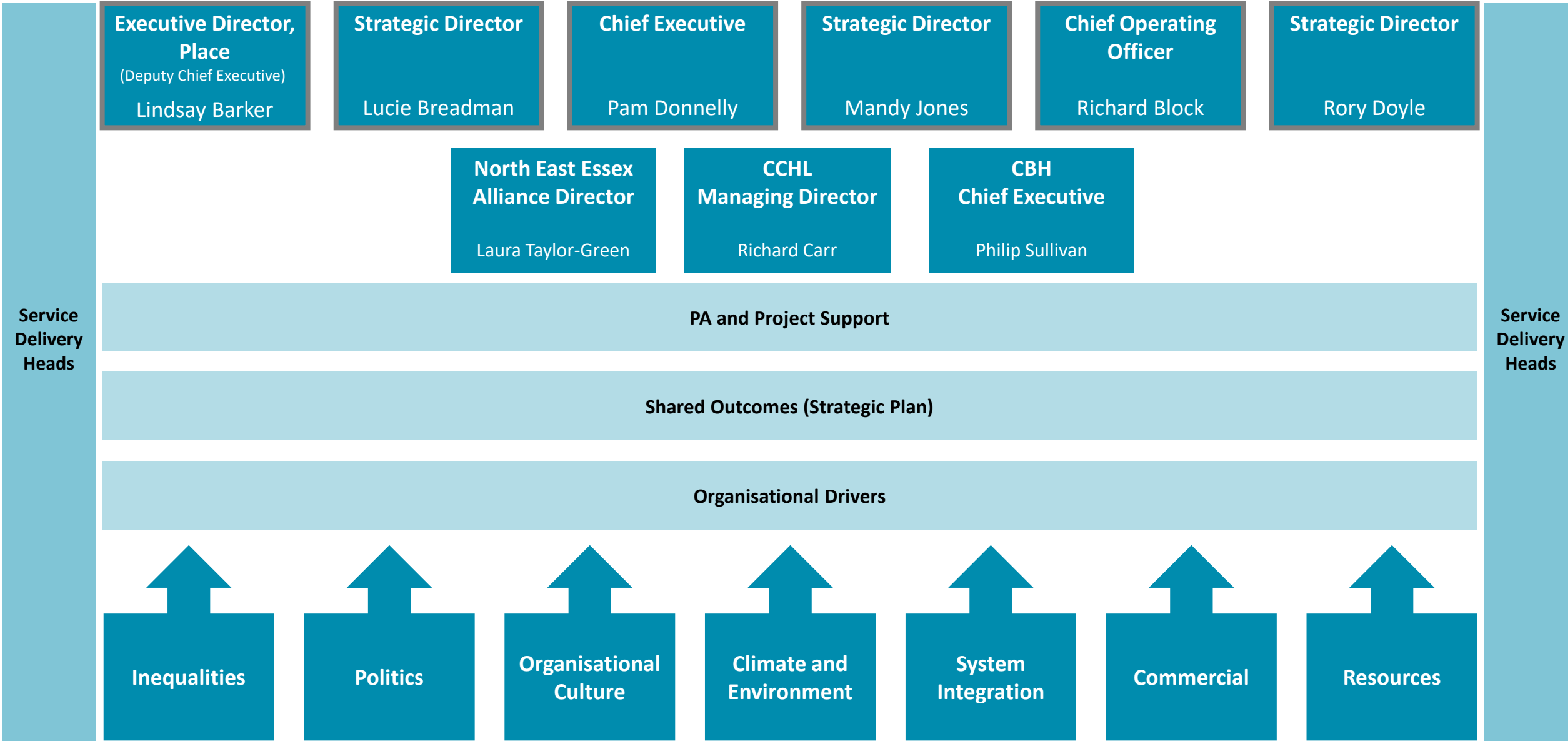
GROWING A FAIR ECONOMY SO EVERYONE BENEFITS

- Made sure support and information was in place for businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis.
- Delivered a wide range of events and initiatives to help celebrate Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee that stimulated the local economy.
- Became a modern day city on 23 November 2022.
- Ran the Future of Colchester survey to develop a three year plan to make the most of Colchester’s modern city for the benefit of all residents, including young people.
- Continue to deliver the Town Deal projects to improve the lives of residents and support businesses.
- Secured £19.66m funding from the Government’s Levelling Up Fund to help tackle inequality, regenerate the St Botolph’s area and boost the local economy, in partnership with Essex County Council.

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE AND CULTURE

- Hosted a stage of the prestigious Women’s Tour in June 2022.
- Supported 25 organisations organising cultural and creative events across the city through our Cultural and Creative Events Fund.
- Invested in our Roman heritage, including new interpretation boards and committing to host a major exhibition in July 2023 ‘Gladiators: A Day at the Roman Games’ at Colchester Castle.
- Committed to improve the Natural History Museum over the next few years by listening to residents and visitors feedback and ideas.





Additional information

NEE Alliance Director role is a NHS role with joint accountability to the Integrated Care Board, Colchester City Council, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council leading work to improve the health and wellbeing

CCHL (Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited) is a company limited by shares, wholly owned by Colchester City Council and provides a wide range of services across the city to generate commercial income

CBH (Colchester Borough Homes) is an arms-length management organisation. CBH provides management and maintenance services to around 7,000 residential, commercial and public buildings in the local area, including the Council's housing stock, Colchester Castle and Colchester Town Hall

Extract from the draft minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 15 March 2023

Town Deal Progress

The Panel received a report from the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Place, providing an update on the Town Deal programme. The report was the first annual progress reports to the Scrutiny Panel, following the Panel's meeting in November 2023 when it received an update on progress on the programme. Lindsay Barker, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Place, and Matthew Brown, Economic Regeneration Manager, attended to present the report and assist the Panel.

The Chair indicated that his principal interest was in the timescales and whether the projects were on track, especially given the challenges around the capital programme.

The Panel received a presentation from the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Place and the Economic Regeneration Manager. This set out:-

- The context for the Town Deal Programme.
- Progress on the projects which were generally progressing well with major milestones being met. Only one project had slipped significantly in terms of timescale.
- Cost inflation was having an impact but this was being managed and mitigated.
- Recent engagement activity. Engagement was at the heart of the programme and a considerable amount of engagement had been undertaken.
- Recent progress on key schemes including the Digital Skills Hub, Jumbo, Holy Trinity Church, Digital Working Hub and the cycling and walking route from East Hill to the University.
- More detailed information on those schemes rated as amber in terms of progress.
- The key risks, which were cost inflation and delays securing permissions and land acquisitions. There were effective mitigations in place to address cost inflation, such as seeking alternative sources of funding and tailoring schemes where necessary. In terms of delays on permissions and acquisition, sponsors and senior officers would engage to try and expedite matters.

In discussion, the Chair sought further detail about the status of the amber projects and whether any were in serious danger of being rated red. Officers confirmed that nothing was in that position presently. Many were amber as they were awaiting clarification on costs. There was still a reasonable amount of time for the delivery of the projects, which had to be completed by 2026 and they had been staged in terms of delivery.

A member of the Panel indicated that similar assurances had been given on earlier projects, which had then run into difficulty. Concern was expressed about the

serious cost pressures that some of the projects would face, particularly on building costs. This would be a particular risk for the Heart of Greenstead project, given the housing element of the project.

The Executive Director, Place, explained that not all projects were to be directly delivered by the Council. For example, the Essex County Hospital scheme was being managed by Essex County Council and the City Council was providing a contribution. There was no risk to the Town Deal programme on those schemes. On the Heart of Greenstead project this was a community led project. The Town Deal team were discussing with the community what the Health and Wellbeing Hub, which was the Town Deal element of the scheme, would look like. There were a number of partners involved and if their ambitions about what could be achieved from the scheme could not be met, then they may need to make a greater contribution. Alternatively, if further funding was not made available, the scheme may need to be scaled back. The housing delivery was not part of the Town Deal programme and was being funded through the Housing Revenue Account.

It was also suggested by a Panel member that the Digital Working Hub in Queen Street was a considerable investment with a comparatively low yield in terms of jobs created, when compared with other schemes such as the Digital Skills Centre. The Economic Regeneration Manager explained the figure given was net direct jobs created. This was a business incubation and growth centre and many more jobs would be created indirectly through the businesses it created and supported. It was suggested that the relevant part of the Appendix to the report be amended accordingly.

Councillor Fox, Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation, was invited to contribute and explained that this linked into the earlier discussion on skills. The Digital Skills Centre at the Wilson Marriage site would concentrate on getting people back into employment by developing their digital skills. Therefore, it was easier to record direct employment that would result from its work. The Digital Working Hub was a business incubation unit that over the long term would create many jobs through the scaling up of the business that it helped get established. Given the nature of the business it supported these were likely to be high value jobs.

A member of the Panel sought confirmation that the funding agreements and business cases were in the public domain. Financial appraisals should also be completed for each of the projects, although it was appreciated that some of the benefits leading from the schemes were social rather than financial. These would help capture the value of the assets at the conclusion of the programme. It was also suggested that some projects such as Heart of Greenstead would be easier to progress if the Council owned the land.

Officers explained that the Council was the Accountable Body for the Town Deal programme and there was a Heads of Terms agreement with government setting out the agreed outcomes, costs and timescales. These would be shared with the Panel. The Business Cases were agreed by government, the Town Deal Board and by Cabinet and were in the public domain. The scheme for Heart of Greenstead had changed since its original design in 2018 and was now focusing on the Community Health and Wellbeing Hub first, which was on land owned by the Council. The wider

housing scheme would be developed on land owned by Notting Hill Genesis, a Housing Association, who had just undergone a change in management and it was anticipated that the sale of this land would progress once the new management team was established. It was a community led scheme and considerable effort had gone into setting up the correct governance arrangements and board membership. There was considerable involvement from partners, including the University and it would be a new model of provision for Colchester. It was always anticipated that it would take the full length of the Town Deal programme to deliver the scheme and ensure it delivered the right outcomes.

Councillor Fox offered a reassurance to the Panel that the Town Deal Board had a range of experience and skills, with representatives from the business, the community and government. There was a clear feeling that although there were issues such as cost inflation, the Board was addressing those issues and enabling the programme to progress. Government appeared to be satisfied with how Colchester was delivering on the programme.

The Panel sought clarification that the timescales on Holy Trinity Church were still compatible with the prospective tenant, and whether this would impact on the refurbishment grants of other churches. Officers explained that the prospective tenant, Community 360, were still very interested but would need reassurance that the building had been de-risked. They did not have the expertise to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding so the Council would do this and ensure the risks from occupancy were removed. Officers were aware of the need to synchronise the bids for funding to ensure they did not cut across one another and to avoid duplication.

It was also suggested that the CGIs created for the programme could be improved and that photoreal CGIs should be used. There were local firms who could provide much better images than had been used to date. If further resource was needed, this should be made available given the importance of the programme. Further consideration should be given to displays on hoardings or in neighbouring shops so that residents were better informed about the projects and the potential benefits. Officers explained that the team had already made contact a leading CGI firm, who were interested in some form of partnership approach, subject to usual procurement processes. More generally work was underway to look at what technology was available to support the community engagement process through better visualisation.

In summary the Chair explained that the Panel was of the view that the programme had not deteriorated since it was last scrutinised. It appeared to be stable with the target dates largely being met. There was a good understanding of the risks and mitigating measures were being pursued where appropriate. It was suggested that a recommendation be made to Cabinet about the need to ensure appropriate resources were made available to help residents better understand the various projects in the city centre.

RESOLVED that the good progress made to date on the Town Deal be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that the presentation of the town centre projects be given greater prominence and that resources be made available to help residents

better understand the projects in the city centre and the benefits that they would bring to the city and its residents.

Extract from the draft minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 15 March 2023

City Status Update

The Panel received a report from the Strategic Director providing an update on the plans and the Council's approach to the benefits from the award of City Status. Lucie Breadman, Strategic Director, Lindsay Barker, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Place, and Matthew Brown, Economic Regeneration Manager, attended to present the report and assist the Panel.

The Strategic Director, together with the Economic Regeneration Manager, and Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, made a presentation to the Panel addressing:-

- The aims and objectives of the Year of Celebration.
- The activities scheduled for the Year of Celebration and timescales. This was wide ranging and did not just concentrate on the city centre. It included a number of events in the rural wards such as the Layer Marney Opera Festival and the West Mersea Town Regatta.
- The tools available to help promote the Year of Celebration, such as the promotional stamps and the cityscape logo.
- The approach being taken with partners, particularly the Business Improvement District. The consensus with partners was that the approach should be to build on existing strengths, priorities and strategies, rather than establishing a new City Status Strategy and Action Plan.
- The benefits of City Status. It would raise aspirations, boost Colchester's image and reputation, give Colchester greater influence and demonstrate its importance in heritage terms. The BID had already reported that Colchester is appearing on new potential investment lists.
- Practical examples of change happening to the City Centre include the Town Deal and Levelling Up Fund projects. The Panel were shown projects focussing on heritage from this programme. The Town Deal and Levelling Up fund projects had a combined value of £40 million, excluding match finding, and were being treated as one programme.
- Some of the key Town Deal projects include the restoration of Jumbo, repairs and restoration of Holy Trinity Church so it could be brought back into use as a community hub, a number of public realm sites such as Holy Trinity Square and St Nicholas Square, and virtual reality tourism.
- The Town Deal projects include a heritage enriched walking route between Colchester Town Station and Firstsite, to improve first impressions of the city centre for those arriving at Colchester Centre Station, improved interpretation at St Botolph's Priory and improvements to the Roman Wall.
- The legacy of City Status. This would build on existing strengths and reflect the multi centre nature of modern Colchester. Recognition that this was about the whole of Colchester, with benefits for the historic core, urban and rural Colchester. The Local Government Association Peer Review Team believed that City Status put Colchester on the cusp of something great. Our strategic

plans, priorities and collaborative approach with partners along with an ambitious approach aim to enhance the benefits of City Status. .

The Chair of the Panel stressed the need for a lexicography of terms given the differing possible meanings and interpretations of the word “City” in this context, which caused confusion. The Chair also noted that there were considerable overlaps between this item and other items the Panel was invited to consider, such as the Town Deal and the Levelling Up projects. The Panel needed to be able to look in more granular detail at the impact of each project. There was concern that each of the items was becoming in effect a scrutiny of the Strategic Plan and it became increasingly difficult to see whether each component was performing adequately.

Councillor King emphasised that there were project disciplines that required the project teams to show what was achieved against the objectives set for the Town Deal and Levelling Up projects. There were clear criteria for the objectives and outcomes of these projects against which progress could and would be measured. It was appreciated that these projects were enmeshed with City Status and whilst these projects would be subject to individual scrutiny, this item brought them together in an overall package. The Executive Director, Place, stressed that work was underway to monitor the outcomes of these projects but that these were at an early stage.

The Chair sought clarification as to whether the Panel was being asked to scrutinise the whole of the Strategic Plan or to consider the additional opportunities that had arisen because of the award of City Status and if so then these needed to be clearly differentiated. Councillor King indicated that he accepted this point and of the need for the individual elements to be scrutinised in detail. However, it was still useful to consider more generally how the city was viewed and how this was changing as a consequence of the award of City Status.

In discussion members of the Panel sought clarification as to how the Year of Celebration would be promoted and marketed. For example would there be a social media campaign with partners and would hard copies of promotional material be made available for those who did not access social media and for use in neighbouring towns and other cities? The Strategic Director confirmed that marketing for the Year of Celebration was already underway and using a range of marketing media and tools. The joint marketing programme based on a shared vision was being led by the BID and was in an early stage of development. This would be key in helping come to an agreed view of what City Status meant for Colchester. There was still a place for hard copy advertising and marketing material and this would be provided, although increasingly venues such as stations were reluctant to take such material.

It was also suggested by members of the Panel that whilst there was a vision of what City Status could achieve, the challenge was to convert this vision into tangible results. In that context, the schedule of events was reassuring and this would be understood by residents in a way strategic visions for Colchester or detail about investment and finance would not be. The emphasis on the word “city” did not resonate with those in rural wards and tangible details about particular schemes was

more likely to be understood and welcomed than an emphasis on vision. Concern was expressed by some members of the Panel that the Year of Celebration events were concentrated in the historic core and a number of key events, such as Rowhedge Regatta, were not included. The Town Deal and Levelling Up Funding were largely devoted to the historic centre and were not being used to address long standing problems outside the city centre, such as flooding in the Hythe.

The Strategic Director accepted the point in respect of rural communities and they met regularly with town and parish clerks. Considerable effort was made to engage with rural communities and other groups, such as young people, and to ensure that the benefits were felt across the wider city. In terms of the Year of Celebration events were not being excluded. Organisers of events could ask for them to be included in the Schedule of Events, and communications had been sent out inviting events to be put forward for inclusion in the Year of Celebration.

It was also emphasised that the Policy Panel had taken the view that the Year of celebration and City Status should include the whole of the City and should not concentrate wholly on the historic city centre.

Members of the Panel suggested ways in which public engagement could be boosted such as through a competition building on the celebration jam being created by Wilkin and Sons, making the images of the public realm improvements available on the Council's website, and producing an online guide to the history of Colchester which could be accessed for those visiting historic and heritage sites.

The Executive Director Place stressed that the Council was working at pace in order to visualise and bring the proposals to life for residents through concepts such as an interactive map. The Council was looking to engage with a local company who could use modern technology in this way to promote the changes planned for the City Centre.

Members of the Panel explored whether the Council was seeking to learn from the experiences of Chelmsford and Southend. The significance of the 2040 date was also questioned and it was suggested that 2043 or 2049 would be more historically significant dates to mark. The Strategic Director explained that the Council had consulted with Chelmsford and Southend and was also linking in with the Key Cities Network. In view of the circumstances that had led to its award of City Status, Southend was taking a different, more reflective approach.

The Panel also discussed how the Council was developing the skills base in the city. Whilst the growth that was being seen was encouraging, the lack of skills was a real issue. Colchester had a low wage economy and the only way to change this was to improve the skills base. The Annual Monitoring Statement showed the slow improvement of skills and the consequent improvement in wage levels had been a theme for the last decade. It had also been identified as an issue in the current and previous Strategic Plan.

The Executive Director agreed that this was a central issue and highlighted that skills development was a key strand of the Council's Economic Strategy. The Health Alliance were looking at skills issues as they saw it as one of the key determinants of

health. It was frustrating that the Shared Prosperity Fund, from which Council had received funding, did not allow investment in skills until year 3. The devolving of responsibility for skills to a more local level was also a key issue in the devolution proposals currently being considered. It was suggested that the Scrutiny Panel could hold a one issue meeting on skills in the city in the new municipal year, to which relevant partners and guests could be invited to present and contribute.

In summary the Chair indicated that the report had been well received and indicated that it demonstrated that the work to build on the award of City Status was well underway, although it was noted that some of this work would have been undertaken notwithstanding the award. After considering the issues raised in the debate it was felt that the importance of a whole city approach should be stressed to Cabinet. There remained some concerns about the engagement with City Status in the rural areas of the city and of the benefits it would bring outside of the centre. Addressing the skills issue should also be a by-product of City Status and it was felt that the importance of this should be stressed to Cabinet. In addition the Panel considered that the City Status work was most effective when it concentrated on the practicalities and the delivery of specific plans and events, and that Cabinet should be encouraged to focus on that element.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The plans and approach already underway for City Status be noted.
- (b) The Panel's Work Programme for 2023-24 include a one item meeting on issues relating to the skills base within the city, with relevant partners invited to attend.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that:-

- (a) A Whole City approach be taken to the work on City Status to ensure that all residents feel involved and were able to take part in the Year of Celebration and that the benefits of City Status were felt across the whole city area.
- (b) The improvement of the skills base within the city be an essential part of City Status.
- (c) There be a greater emphasis and focus on detailed practical and deliverable plans and targets.



To aid the Cabinet's consideration of the Scrutiny Panel's recommendation the current Schedule of Events for the Year of Celebration is set out below.

Date	Event Name	Type	Venue
Feb	Big Women	Art	firstsite
Feb	Minories Pottery Fair	Art	Minories
Feb	London Mozart Players	Musical	Mercury
March	Bury Me In Colchester Mud	Theatre/Heritage	Arts Centre
March	They Don't Pay? We Won't Pay!	Theatre	Mercury
March	City Celebration – Royal Charters	Online Exhibition	City Museums
March	The Story of Britain's 1 st Town Wall	CAT Exhibition	Minories Galleries
March	Col Art Society Spring Exhibition	Art Exhibition	Cuckoo Farm Studios
April	Around the World In 80 Days	Theatre	Mercury
April	Dino Discovery Day	Youth Fun	Colchester Zoo
April	Sculpture Trail	Sculpture Exhibition	Fingringhoe Wick NR
May	Great Expectations	Theatre	Mercury
May	Jane's Walk Colchester	Community Walking	Various
May	Ride London Classique	Cycle Race	Various
May	Zoobilee	Family Fun	Colchester Zoo
June	Medieval & Oyster Fayre	Heritage	Castle Park
June	Essex Summer Opera Festival	Musical / Festival	Layer Marney
June	Colchester Food and Drink Festival	Festival	Castle Park
June	Zoo's Big Birthday Bash	Family Fun	Colchester Zoo
July	Gladiators - A Day At The Roman Games	Exhibition/Heritage	Castle Museum
July	Youth Take Over	Youth Arts Day	Mercury
July	Rowhedge Regatta	Maritime Fun	Rowhedge
July	Colchester Garden Festival	Festival	Various
July	Unbelievable	Theatre	Mercury
July	Colchester Roman Festival	Re-enactment Fun	Castle Park
August	West Mersea Town Regatta	Regatta / Festival	Mersea Island
August	Colchester Siege Spectacular	Commemoration	City Centre & Park
August	Olly Murs	Musical	Castle Park
August	Colchester Pride	Festival Fun	Firstsite
Sept	Invasion Colchester	Festival / Retail	City Centre
Sept	Heritage Open Days	Heritage	Various
Sept	Eco Festival	Festival Fun	Castle Park
Sept	Colchester Soapbox Rally	Kart Race/Family	High Street
Oct	Colchester Fringe Festival	Festival	Various sites

Extract from the minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee meeting of 7 March 2023

352. Financial Monitoring report – April to December 2022

The Committee considered a report giving it the opportunity to hold Service Managers and Portfolio Holders accountable for their budgets.

Paul Cook, Head of Finance, attended the meeting remotely to introduce the report and assist the Committee with its deliberations. The Committee heard that a meeting had taken place with the Council's newly appointed external auditors from 2023/2024, KPMG. It was hoped that a substantial amount of the 2023/2024 audit could be carried out during the financial year 2023/2024, and it was intended to present a proposed audit plan to the Committee in the near future. The draft 2021/2022 statement of accounts had also now been published the day before the meeting on the Council's website. These were a provisional set of accounts, as it was necessary to wait for finality on some of the carried forward figures, however, given the continuing delays in obtaining the audit opinion of BDO in respect of the 2020/2021 accounts, it had become impossible to delay publication any further. If Councillors had any questions in respect of these draft accounts, Paul Cook would be happy to answer these.

The Committee heard that the Officer's report set out the financial position as at the end of quarter 3 for 2022/2023, which showed an overspend on services of £880,000, offset by technical gains due to higher interest earnings. Although being in an overspend position was not ideal, given the inflationary pressures which the Council had to deal with, this was not an impossible position and managers were working hard to get to within budget before the end of the financial year.

The Committee noted the overall robust financial performance which had been achieved under difficult circumstances, and wondered how close the Council was in practical terms to achieving zero net expenditure at the end of the financial year. Paul Cook confirmed that interest earnings were performing well, and capital expenditure was lower than budgeted for, however, inflationary pressures meant that a lot of hard work would be required, particularly in some service areas, to make the necessary cost savings and at this stage it was too soon to say what the final budget position would be.

A Committee member raised concerns in relation to items which were driving the overspend and income reductions in both Neighbourhood Services and Market and Street Trading. What had created the need for the overspend on staff costs which had been generated by the use of agency staff? Paul Cook addressed the spend on agency staff, and explained that the Service Manager was focussing on establishing

a proper footing for the financial year 2023/2024 with a higher level of recruitment, which it was anticipated would lead to a reduction in the need for agency staff in the future.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, attended the meeting remotely, and with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting. The Committee heard that Neighbourhood Services was undergoing a transformation, and although it was intended to continue to provide investment for frontline services, transformation in areas such as garden waste was planned for the future to allow the more efficient use of existing staff and resources, which would reduce reliance on agency staff.

Paul Cook confirmed that the budget for 2023/2024 had been the subject of a very careful overview, and it was intended that recruitment of the correct number of Council staff would take place as part of a much clearer approach to the staffing needs of the service. The budget which would be set for 2023/2024 would reflect an adequate level of staffing to deliver the planned service. It was accepted that the previous budget which had been set for Market and Street Trading had been too ambitious, and this would be addressed in the future to enable this budget to be delivered.

A Committee member questioned the apparent fluctuation in the sales of paper fluctuate, and sought clarity on the relationship between income and outgoings with regard to the Council's recycling activities. Paul Cook advised the Committee that the sale of recycled paper was subject to very volatile price fluctuations through the year which made it difficult to budget for. Material costs associated with recycling had risen, and a lot of work was being undertaken to improve the procurement of materials as much as possible, but this would always represent a risk area for the Council. The Committee considered that it would be helpful to gain a better understanding of what the budgetary drivers were in this area, as it was a complex area and it was necessary to be clear on the cause of the deficits so that the appropriate action could be taken. A recommendation to Cabinet would be made to ask it to consider this area in greater detail.

Councillor Cory offered the Committee assurance that the Council was considering the waste and recycling service it offered, and maintained a strong desire to support people to recycle. Government reform was imminent which would impact the ways in which recycling was handled across the country, and it was important to ensure that any changes which were made by the Council took this into account.

In discussion, the Committee noted that parking revenue had delivered over budget, and considered that care should be taken when considering car park closures in future to protect this income stream. In response to questions from the Committee Paul Cook confirmed that more detailed information on the Council's banking charges and management of fuel costs could be provided to the Committee, together with a more comprehensive overview of the recovery of housing benefit overpayments year on year, which was a complicated area of work.

Councillor Cory considered that the Council's award-winning Parking was extremely competent in developing and managing the Council's Parking Strategy, and income and costs were carefully modelled before any decisions were taken, and these were factored into the business case for any changes.

A Committee member noted that the Capital Programme contained some significant projects, and wondered whether the ongoing monitoring of these could be dealt with by the Committee, to ease the pressure of work on Cabinet.

The high level of receipts in the Housing Revenue Account was noted by the Committee, which was particularly impressive given the difficult current financial situation in the country. Under these circumstances, the level of rent collections being achieved was a credit to both staff and tenants.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that:

- Consideration be given to requesting that the Governance and Audit Committee monitor the progress of specific items on the Council's Capital Programme;
- Particular attention be given to the budget for Neighbourhood Services to ensure that budgets for the forthcoming financial year were accurate and reflected the current financial situation.

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RESOLVED that:

- The financial performance of General Fund Services and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the first nine months of 2022/23 had been considered;
- the forecast budget overspend of £434k on the General Fund be noted.

Extract from the draft minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 14 March 2023

Review of Section 106 Developer Contributions

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that; -

- (a) The monthly report to councillors, detailing available S106 monies, includes the Local Infrastructure Delivery Table (LIDP);
- (b) A robust response be provided to Essex County Council, regarding the latest version of the County Council's Developers' Document;
- (c) Further support be given to the infrastructure audit;
- (d) A specialist officer be appointed to oversee S106 and the infrastructure audit.

RECOMMENDED to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure that, at their next meeting with Essex County Council's Portfolio Holder for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning, they raise the issue of liaison between the two councils regarding the setting of S106 contribution requirements on different developments.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Panel receives a report on what the process should be for collection of S106 funds, and to explain what items are collected

PETITIONS, PUBLIC STATEMENTS, QUESTIONS

(i) Have Your Say submissions from members of the public

Date of Meeting	Details of Members of the Public	Subject Matter	Form of Response	Date Completed
Special Council Meeting, 23 March 2023	Jane Black Sir Bob Russell Russ Edwards, Latimer Councillor Tom Kane, Mayor of Wivenhoe Councillor Shaun Boughton, Wivenhoe Town Council Manda O'Connell, Tendring \Colchester Borders Garden Community Liaison Group	Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Submission Version of Development Plan Document -	Issues raised were discussed as part of the Council debate	23 March 223

Date petition received	Lead Petitioner	Subject Matter	Form of Response	Date Completed
None received				

