



Governance & Audit Committee

Item
9(i)

16 December 2025

Report of	Simon Coward, Managing Director Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd	Author	Simon Coward
Title	Amphora Draft Accounts 24/25		
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report focuses on Amphora Connect (ie Colchester Fibre), Amphora Events (ie Colchester Fibre) and Helpline – all key services within Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd (CATL). The Amphora Growth & Finance Update 2025/26 is also written within the context of Local Government Reform (LGR). These Amphora Growth & Finance Updates are presented to and reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee annually, as its Shareholding Committee. The Governance & Audit Committee are asked to review the Amphora Growth & Finance Update 2025/26 and make recommendations to Cabinet to approve Amphora’s continued financial management and growth plans.
- 1.2 This report also reminds the Shareholder Committee of the governance arrangements that the Council has in place in order to monitor and review the activities of the companies.
- 1.3 The Amphora Growth & Finance Update has been drawn together by Amphora’s fourth Managing Director (Simon Coward, since May 2024) and sits within Amphora’s Growth Strategy 2025-30 as approved by the Council in June 2025. It should be noted that following the CIPFA review Colchester Amphora Energy (CAEL) and Colchester Amphora Homes (CAHL) have now been hibernated. This led to the remainder of the company being restructured, focussing primarily on the successful services run by Colchester Trading Ltd – Amphora Connect, Amphora Events and Helpline (including CCTV).

2. Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 To review, and make recommendations to Cabinet on, the Amphora Growth & Finance Update 2025/26 – within the context of the approved Amphora Growth Strategy 2025-30. With specific review of:
 - Unaudited Accounts 2024/25 & Draft Annual Report 2024/25

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

3.1 Unaudited Accounts 2024/25 (Appendix 1)

- Amphora's Finance Manager has been working with Amphora's new Auditor – Affinia to complete the external audit of the 2024/25 Accounts ahead of previous years target completion dates

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 No alternative options are provided due to the required role of the Committee as shareholder, set out above and the ability to recommend with or without changes.

5. Background Information

5.1 Company Origins

5.1.1 The Localism Act 2011 enabled local authorities to undertake activities designed to make a profit, but only if delivered within a trading company structure. Using these powers, the Council established wholly owned companies that were incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 on 1 June 2017 and began operating from 1 April 2018.

5.1.2 The original Business Plans covered a three-year period from 2018-21 and reflected the Council's aim to create a commercial approach to activities that could deliver some services and products directly, whilst generating profits that would be reinvested in the Council to help continue to deliver non-profitmaking services with social value. This public sector ethos, at the heart of the companies, remains a core purpose that will be increasingly important as the City, Council and companies all adapt to the forthcoming Local Government Reform (LGR). The latest Amphora Growth Strategy for 2025-30 was approved by the Council in June 25.

5.1.3 Three subsidiary companies, each with distinct areas of trading, were also formed:

- Colchester Amphora Energy Ltd (CAEL) – now hibernated
- Colchester Amphora Homes Ltd (CAHL) – now hibernated
- Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd (CATL)

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.2 The recommendations will have no disproportionate impact on any protected group.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 Governance is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the City as set out in that Plan. The activities of the Council's companies contribute to most of the Strategic Plan priorities.

8. Consultation

8.1 There is no specific consultation requirement generated in relation to this Report. The Amphora Growth & Finance Update 2025/26 is considered by the Governance & Audit Committee in their role as shareholder prior to them being put before Cabinet for approval, providing consultation and a chance to comment and make recommendation on the Updates.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 There is no specific publicity consideration in relation to this Report. Individual activities of the companies that require public consultation will undertake them at appropriate times, by stakeholder engagement workshops, planning application consultations, press releases and Council reports.

10. Financial implications

10.1 See Appendices 1 and 2 for detailed financial accounts.

Over the last decade we have seen substantial cuts to Local Government funding, which have led to significant financial challenges for the sector. We need to be mindful of all spend and manage, as best as possible, within existing budget envelopes and mitigate potential overspends. This challenge will be just as prominent in 2025/26 particularly with the advent of Local Government Reform over the next two years and we need to continue to ensure financial resilience is a critical part of decision-making.

The expectation from the section 151 officer is the Amphora team and CCHL / CATL Boards will work with finance business partners - through Shareholder Officer Reviews / Board Meetings - to find options and solutions to achieve the agreed financial performance targets, cognisant that there are likely to be some external financial pressures which are outside of our control.

Amphora's draft Growth Strategy (including 5 year forecast) has been shared with the previous and new section 151 officer. A technical review is underway of the approved Growth Strategy and 5 year forecast, to ensure alignment to the Council's financial objectives and to ensure it is sufficiently robust.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

11.1 Health and wellbeing is influenced by several factors, many of which fall under the responsibility of the Council. The Company activities span various aspects and assist the

Council to do all it reasonably can to promote positive health benefits to our residents; whilst reducing, removing, or minimising any unintended consequences to health that may arise from services or decisions – these can be found in plans for Amphora Connect (ie Colchester Fibre), Amphora Events (ie Colchester Events), Helpline (including CCTV).

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 The matters herein do not result in harm to the health and safety of the general public. The work of the companies has individual health and safety requirements relevant to each activity. For example, events operations are managed on site in accordance with a number of relevant health and safety regulations.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 CCHL (Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd) and CATL (Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd) both have a risk register that is actively managed. Each of the subsidiary companies have their own risk registers. All the companies have a Business Continuity Plan.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 None to note

15. Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Implications

- 15.1 The Amphora Growth & Finance Updates consider the potential challenges and opportunities resulting from Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.

Appendices

Confidential: Appendix 1 – Unaudited Accounts 2024/25