

**COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET  
13 March 2019  
SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

**Part A**

(open to the public including the media)

**Urgent Item**

To consider the report on the establishment of the Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group (page 2)

**Waste, Sustainability and Transportation**

**7(ii) Sustainable Transport in Colchester**

To consider the recommendation in draft minute 28 from the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel meeting of 6 March 2019 (page 5)

**Commercial Services**

**8(i) Updates to the Business Plans of the Council's Companies**

To consider the recommendation in the draft minute from the Governance and Audit Committee meeting of 7 March 2019 (page 7)

**Business and Culture**

**Item 11(ii) The Walls Project**

To consider the recommendation in draft minute 26 from the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel meeting of 6 March 2019 (page 13)





## Cabinet

13 March 2019

Item

2

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Assistant Director of Policy and Corporate</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Richard Clifford</b> ☎ 507832
<b>Title</b>	<b>Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	Not applicable		

### 1. Executive Summary

1.1 An urgent item raised by the Leader of the Council to create a new Task and Finish Group focused on Conservation and Environmental Sustainability. This report seeks Cabinet's approval for some of the detailed arrangements for the Task and Finish Group, such as terms of reference and the political composition. Once these matters are agreed the Task and Finish Groups will be set up and a first meeting arranged for the next municipal year.

### 2. Recommended Decision

2.1 To approve the terms of reference, political composition, and reporting timescales of the Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group, as set out at paragraph 5.1 below.

2.2 To note Cabinet's preference for the first meeting to be held promptly in the new municipal year 2019/20.

### 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

3.1 In order for the Task and Finish Groups to begin work it is necessary for their terms of reference, political composition, and reporting timescales to be agreed. The appointment of the Chair is for the Task and Finish group to agree at its initial meeting.

### 4. Alternative Options

4.1 It would be possible to propose alternative terms of reference or a different political composition. However, it is felt that proposed terms of reference identify the key issues that need to be addressed. In terms of political composition, it is important that the Task and Finish Group is cross party and membership therefore incorporates all political groups on the Council.

### 5. Background Information

#### 5.1 Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group

The proposals for the Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group are as follows:-

#### ***Terms of Reference:***

*To explore methods of conservation of natural habitats and bio-diversity, whether through adapting existing practices and places or creating new ecologically diverse environments with sustainable practices built in.*

*To encourage renewable energy generation and carbon footprint reduction in both the public and private sectors across the borough.*

### **Membership:**

*The membership should range between 6-7 permanent Councillor members.*

*Guests and experts maybe invited to the Task and Finish Group as appropriate and agreed by members.*

*The political breakdown will be: Liberal Democrat 2, Labour 2, Conservative 2, Highwoods Independents 1.*

*Chairperson: The appointment of the Chair is for the Task and Finish group to agree at its initial meeting to be scheduled in the new municipal year 2019/20.*

### **Reporting timescales:**

*This group should report to Cabinet every 3-4 months. It may meet with greater frequency, as agreed by members.*

5.2 Once these arrangements are agreed, the political groups will be invited to nominate members to each of the Groups.

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

6.1 There are no direct equality, diversity and human rights implications. The Task and Finish groups will need to consider the equality, diversity and human rights implications of any proposals they make.

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

7.1 The Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group will support the following Strategic Plan priorities:-

- Growth – To ensure Colchester’s growth is sustainable and bio-diversity is encouraged;
- Responsibility – To encourage public and private sector organisations to act with greater environmental responsibility;
- Opportunity – Create new opportunities for use of renewable energy sources and conservation of natural habitats;
- Wellbeing – To enhance the wellbeing of residents through the promotion and protection of our natural environment, reducing practices with detrimental environmental and health outcomes.

## **8. Financial implications**

8.1 There are no direct financial implications. The resources for supporting the Task and Finish groups will be met from existing budgets. It will be for Cabinet to consider the financial implications of any proposals put forward by the Task and Finish groups.

## **9. Standard References**

9.1 There are no particular consultation or publicity considerations; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

**DRAFT EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF POLICY AND PUBLIC INITIATIVES PANEL HELD ON 6 MARCH 2019**

**28. Sustainable Transport in Colchester**

**Councillor Harris (in respect of his membership of the Bus Users Group) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).**

Steve Wickers, on behalf of First Essex Buses, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He highlighted the need for a transport system which was fit for purpose. He confirmed that the bus network offered 90,000 seats into the town centre every day and, as such, was a valuable part of the economy. He advocated the need for a new transport plan which he would be willing to help formulate. He recognised the need for people to be able to get in and out of town much more quickly, to increase frequency of buses and schemes to boost the economy. He emphasised how difficult it was currently to get in and out of town.

The Chairman asked Steve Wickers his view on bus lanes and whether they improved the flow of traffic for buses.

Steve Wickers responded by acknowledging the high cost of bus lanes and the difficulty of accommodating the lanes in areas where the streets were very narrow. He emphasised the importance of small-scale initiatives such as protected junctions and yellow lining which would reduce traffic in the town centre. He considered there was too much congestion and plans and policies were needed to make it quicker for buses to access the town centre, taking priority and shifting cars out of the town such as with park and ride. He acknowledged the need for policies to protect walkers and riders which could run in parallel. He also acknowledged the need for cleaner vehicles and explained that the bus companies had invested in this.

Councillor Buston did not support bus lanes on the grounds that for the majority of time these lanes were empty whilst the remainder of the road network was congested. He considered they should only be introduced where absolutely necessary.

Councillor Harris asked how the Council and the bus operators could work effectively together to ensure greater numbers of people regularly using the bus network.

Steve Wickers responded to Councillor Harris by explaining the need for policy that prioritised modes of transport such as rapid transport schemes and others with less of an impact on the road space. He emphasised that the bus operators wanted to participate in the decision making behind this formulation of policy.

Chris Bromeley, on behalf of Repair, Reuse, Recycle CIC, a proactive environmental social enterprise with a particular interest in using waste as a resource. He proposed a bicycle project which would support the new Colchester Orbital cycle route, promoting health and fitness for all and provide accessible solutions to sustainable transport. The project would target young volunteers to train as cycle mechanics to give them pathways to employment. The project would use repair and sell donated bikes to ensure they would not become funding dependent. Later phases of the project would be to launch a cycle hire scheme located to boost tourism and at key points along the Colchester Orbital and to promote individual and family use of Colchester Orbital. Initial partners had included Firstsite and Essex Youth Service and the Council's Zone

Wardens. He asked for assistance to locate premises from which to operate to enable the project to grow. The project could then commence, sustain growth and increase the diversion of waste.

Councillor Harris asked about the most appropriate way to assist with the project and Councillor Higgins, whilst welcoming the proposal sought clarification on whether the project was linked with the existing bike hire scheme at the railway station.

Chris Bromeley explained that the core principle of the scheme was to use waste as a resource and this was achieved by using bikes which were found or donated and to get young people involved in acquiring new skills, repairing the bikes and subsequently gaining employment. Essentially, the project was based on a waste reduction core principle. He considered this to be a unique identity with a track record of success.

Councillor Lissimore welcomed the ideas whilst referring to the particular problem of bikes being stolen and the need for people to feel confident that they are able to bring their bikes into town but also travel home as well. She had been Chair of the Colchester Youth Strategy Group and referred to the Lads need Dads scheme and the need for skills to be passed on to young people.

Chris Bromeley explained that the proposal provided added value in terms of greater participation at family days for orienteering and treasure hunts and also work with the Youth Justice Team for young people to learn how to repair things using their hands and heads. He explained that he had previously worked in the military and in the NHS.

Councillor Buston acknowledged the problems associated with bikes being stolen and the impact this had on people's willingness to cycle.

The Chairman was of the view that the proposal was an exciting one which closely matched a number of the Council's Strategic Aims, including health and wellbeing, tourism and also helping to build skills and entrepreneurship or young people. He confirmed that the Panel would discuss the proposal when considering the contents of the Panel's work programme.

Nick Chilvers addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to Colchester's bus station and that it was not very welcoming. He explained the difficulties for bus drivers as they approached the station, having to jockey for position with other road users and pedestrians waiting for buses. He also referred to the efforts of the Council to redevelop the adjacent Vineyard Gate area and he had asked whether these redevelopment plans would include a review of the facilities for buses. He had been told that there had been no discussions about the bus station layout, rather that this was a matter between the developer and the Highway Authority. He was of the view that the Council must have some stake in the future of the bus station, particularly if there was to be an emphasis on residents leaving their cars at home and adopting public transport options. He acknowledged there had been a lack of interest in the matter despite the need for Councils to work with the bus operators he was of the view that most people would expect the Council to lobby for an improvement and factor it in the development proposals for Vineyard Gate. He also referred to the plans for the development of the Queen Street Hotel.

Peter Kay, on behalf of the Bus Users Group, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to the new Transport Policy for Colchester which had been published in 2001 and his hopes for the emerging Transport Policy. He explained the need for Colchester travel in peak periods to be less car based than in off peak periods, and he considered this to be because 9 to 5 workers were provided with over 3,000 employer based free parking spaces in the central area. He referred to the thousands of people who travelled each day to work in their cars to Colchester from Tendring, half of whom lived near rail stations, but the poor rail service and expensive fares meant that the rail line was a wasted

one. He asked whether there were any facts over the previous 25 years to demonstrate that sustainable travel alternatives had succeeded in reducing journeys by car. He asked for the consideration of work place parking levy powers as a means to address traffic problems, explaining that six local authorities had recently opted to investigate the measures. He considered that this would have a big impact on peak time traffic problems whilst enabling the Council to raise revenue to spend on transport improvements.

Councillor Lissimore asked what was considered the main priority to increase public transport and bus usage for short journeys. She was of the view that bus usage was cost prohibitive and it was cheaper to travel by car and park, especially as a couple or a group of people.

Peter Kay explained that bus companies charged much higher fares per mile for short, walkable journeys whilst the fares for journeys of three to four miles, which were too long to walk, were considered more reasonable. He explained that more recently there were more family tickets on offer, but he was of the view that the complexity of the offers made them difficult to market. He referred again to the free all-day parking offered by employers at work places in the town centre.

Councillor Buston referred to his preference for incentives to drive behaviour change. He cited the example of Edinburgh which operated a very cheap and comprehensive bus service and, as a consequence, the buses were always well used.

Peter Kay was of the view that it was easier to provide a cheap and attractive bus service in a city the size of Edinburgh whilst Colchester was too big to accommodate residents predominantly travelling by car but too small to operate a comprehensive transport system like the Edinburgh model. He advocated the investigation of the workplace transport levy by the Council and considered this to be the main priority which would make a difference in Colchester.

Ken Walker addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that he used the park and ride facilities in Cambridge because he wanted to visit the shops and the cost of parking in the town centre was too prohibitive. He was therefore of the view that Colchester needed to be a place where people wanted to go and the parking charges needed to be pitched at the right level. He commuted to work, using public transport and on foot and he cycled at weekends, as such he was in favour of sustainable transport. He asked what had prompted the report to be presented to the Panel and asked for reasons to be stated for the Council to invest in sustainable transport, whether this be to reduce air pollution, improve safety, reduce congestion or an ethical project for instance. He considered residents should know why the Council would consider spending money on this issue, what would be achieved and what it would cost.

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director Policy and Corporate providing a background to current sustainable transport initiatives, programmes and projects in Colchester.

Rachel Forkin, Transport and Sustainability Manager, presented the report and responded to members questions. She explained that the issue of Sustainable Transport had been included in the Panel's work programme following the public engagement session in September 2018 when key themes included provision of cycling, public transport and electric vehicle charging.

Increasing the use of sustainable travel could help tackle climate change by reducing reliance on the car and thus cutting carbon emissions and reducing congestion. It also influenced health, by improving air quality whilst also promoting physical activity. It was therefore important to better understand the factors and reasons behind why people chose to use sustainable transport, and how we provide for and promote sustainable transport as a suitable and viable option for journeys within, to and from Colchester.

Sustainable transport was used to describe all forms of transport which minimised emissions of carbon dioxide and pollutants and was used as a catch all term to include approaches and topics such as:

- reducing the need to travel;
- reducing car dependence and use;
- greater reliance on cycling, walking and other 'active travel modes';
- promotion and uptake of alternatives such as car sharing, public transport; and
- cleaner transport and new technologies such as electric vehicles.

The report set out some of the opportunities and challenges to providing and encouraging use of different forms of sustainable transport in Colchester and summarised some current projects which encouraged use of sustainable modes of travel, including:

- Air Quality
- Traffic flows and Congestion
- Transport Patterns
- Active Travel
- Travel Plans, Car Clubs and Ride Sharing
- Public Transport
- Low Emission Vehicles

Councillor Buston welcomed the report and the ideas contained in it which could be developed for future consideration. He referred to the need for a Southern Relief Road to address the congestion problem across the town.

Councillor Harris was supportive of the issues identified in the report. He was particularly interested in the walking initiatives highlighted and the benefits to healthy lifestyles. He expressed concerns about the piecemeal development of the town and the impact this had made on the areas around Brook Street and Mersea Road. He advocated the development of policies within the local schools and the academies to create a walking and cycling ethos, include principles of road safety, for young school age children. He considered this would create a step change impact.

Councillor Higgins considered the main objective for the adoption of sustainable transport measures had to be the reduction in air pollution. She agreed with the problems being concentrated in the areas around Brook Street, Magdalen Street and Mersea Road. She considered that residents needed to be educated in the benefits of reduced car ownership, especially in areas where residents parking systems were in operation. She was also concerned about the proliferation of work vans in residential areas and the space these were taking up. She referred to Essex County Council's recent review of bus stopping points, including relocations and a lack of seating and shelter and the impact this had on elderly people, particularly those with mobility problems. She mentioned issues for cyclists, including sheltered cycle storage, adequate signage for cycle parking and cycle routes. She also explained that there was no service on a Sunday from Colchester Town railway station which impacted on the number of car journeys were being made to Colchester North station as a consequence and she also commented that it was not possible to purchase combined train and bus tickets on the local buses. She was of the view that a significant number of Cambridge residents benefitted from free private car parking facilities in the town centre which impacted on local people's willingness to use the park and ride facilities. She supported the proposal to consider the introduction of a workplace parking levy although, on safety grounds, she considered this should not be applicable for those needing to park at their place of work at night.

Councillor Scott-Boutell supported the proposal to embed a walking and cycling ethos for young school children, particularly in the light of the allocation of senior school places at establishments

which were not the closest for some residents.

Councillor Lissimore was of the view that the walking and cycling ethos needed to be targeted at children before they reach school age by reaching out to nurseries, pre-schools and childminders. She considered this would make a strong contribution towards default modes of travel to school being by foot and cycle in preference to cars. She referred to Section 106 Agreement funding and was aware that the average financial contribution in Essex per property was around £6,000 whilst Essex County Council required funding of £30,000 in order to remain cost neutral. She was concerned that the Section 106 regime was being required to encompass more and more in terms of mitigation of a new development, whilst developers were inclined to seek reviews of Section 106 requirements on the grounds of reduced viability. She was of the view that the priorities for Section 106 funding contributions needed to be reviewed and that sustainable transport measures needed to be one of the top five priorities.

Councillor Buston referred to the issue of traffic congestion at school opening times whilst this was not a particular problem at school closing times. He also referred to the existence of cycling proficiency tests for school children and the high proportion of children who used to cycle to school in years gone by.

Councillor Hayter referred to the proposal for a walking and cycling ethos for school children and his own experience of the Bikeability Scheme which he supported as a means of encouraging children and parents to cycle together.

The Chairman asked how often Council officers met with the bus operators and whether the meetings could work better.

The Transport and Sustainability Manager confirmed that officers and representatives from the bus companies attended meetings organised by Essex County Council on a quarterly basis. She explained that the meetings were useful in terms of the discussions which took place on activities and new developments and she acknowledged that the Local Authorities could demonstrate their support for the objectives which the bus companies were endeavouring to work towards.

*RESOLVED* that the contents of the report be noted.

*RECOMMENDED* to Cabinet that the following issues be considered as potential contributions to the promotion of sustainable transport in Colchester Borough:

- A review of Parking Charges;
- Investigation of the workplace parking levy initiative, for peak times only, not for late night shift workers;
- The Repair, Reuse Recycle bicycle project, pitched to the Panel by Chris Bromeley, in terms of his request for suitable premises from which to operate the project, potential partnership working and tourism opportunities;
- An initiative to encourage nurseries, pre-schools and childminders, as well as local schools and academies, to adopt a walking and cycling ethos for journeys to school and pre-school;
- Work with Repair, Reuse and Recycle and other local charities to ensure walking and cycling for children is inclusive for all families, including those unable to afford bicycles and their maintenance costs;
- Closer working with Essex County Council to improve road signage of cycle routes;

- Working towards bringing cycling and public transport to the heart of Local Plan policies, such as discussions with the bus companies about viable routes within the Garden Community proposals;
- Work with the bus companies and Greater Anglia with a view to securing the introduction of a combined ticketing system across bus and train services and improvements to train timetabling and train frequencies at Colchester Town station;
- Liaison with Essex County Council and the local bus companies to highlight the importance of accessibility of bus stopping points, in terms of location, seating and shelter;
- A feasibility exercise to investigate the viability of introducing a Hopper bus service, potentially operating from North Station into the town centre, either working with the bus companies or investigating alternative sources of funding, such as the use of Section 106 contributions or sponsorship, to cover driver, vehicle and running costs;
- A review of the Section 106 financial contribution regime with a view to allocating sustainable transport measures within the top five priorities for funding.

*A link to the report considered by the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel can be found by clicking on the link [here](#).*

## **Updates to the Business Plans of the Council's Companies**

### **Extract from the draft minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee meeting of 7 March 2019**

#### **Review of the Business Plans, Governance and Performance of the Council's Wholly - Owned Companies**

Dan Gascoyne, Assistant Director, Policy and Corporate and acting as the Council's client representative for the wholly owned companies, introduced the Review of the Business Plans, Governance and Performance of the Council's Wholly Owned Companies. The report requests that the Committee note the governance arrangements that are in place between the Council and Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited and its subsidiary companies. The Committee were also asked to consider and review the activities and financial performance of Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited and its subsidiary companies and to also review, and make recommendations to Cabinet on the refreshed Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited Business Plan and those of the subsidiary companies.

Councillor Nick Barlow, Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services and Chairman of the Board for Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited, addressed the Committee and explained how the company were keen to hear about how the Committee would like to take the relationship forward. Councillor Barlow informed the Committee of issues he personally felt had arisen since being a member of the board. Whilst he felt it was essential for the Portfolio Holder of Commercial Services to also act as Chair of the Board at the beginning of the company, he was no longer convinced that this was the most appropriate model going forward. In addition he considered that further work needed to be undertaken in providing training for Councillors about the role and work of the companies.

Councillor Barlow thanked the other Board members and officers for all their hard work spent setting up the companies over the last year.

It was suggested by the Committee that it would help Councillors in communicating with the companies if there was a designated contact email address. This approach worked well with Colchester Borough Homes. The Committee felt very strongly that it was important that the companies were seen as transparent. Mr Pritchard, Managing Director of Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd, agreed that more work needed to be done on public relations and communications with regards to the companies, and in particular further consideration needed to be given to the balance of information put in the public domain and that considered as commercially sensitive.

In response to questions from members, Councillor Barlow gave a brief break down with regards to the companies, their roles and the major projects. . Fiona Duhamel informed the Committee that Amphora Energy had received a £3.3 million grant and also an additional £200,000 for due diligence towards the Heat Network project. She explained how the low carbon technology and the concept of a heat network was innovative and the Government was keen to build on the concept and develop similar networks across the United Kingdom. There was also potential to develop further heat networks across the borough. The Committee stressed the need to publicise this work further.

A further question was asked with regards to having independent non-executive directors to bring business experience on the board and seeking those with external experience. Councillor Barlow informed the Committee that this was a discussion that was currently being held within

Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited. The Committee also agreed with the suggestion by Councillor Barlow that it would be more appropriate for Councillor appointments to the Board to be non-executive members, although there would need to be clear lines of communication with relevant Cabinet members. In terms of the issues around appointing non-executive members to the Board, the Committee requested a further report be submitted to the first meeting of the Committee in the new municipal year.

It was also suggested that it would help the Committee discharge its stakeholder function to receive a bi-annual update from CCHL.

*RESOLVED* that

- (a) The governance arrangements in place between the Council and Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited and its subsidiary companies be noted
- (b) Regular briefings be given to all Councillors with regards to the operation and structure of the Companies.
- (c) Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd be asked to give further consideration as to how Councillors could be provided with effective direct contact links with CCHL and its subsidiaries.
- (d). To RECOMMEND to CABINET that it consider whether future Councillor appointments to the Board of Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd be limited to non-executive members only.
- (e) The Governance and Audit Committee receive bi-annual interim reports from Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited
- (f) Training be provided to the Governance and Audit Committee on its role as the stakeholder Committee for Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited.
- (g). A further report to come back to the Governance and Audit Committee on the 25 June 2019 on issues relating to the appointment of non-executive Directors to the Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Limited board.

**DRAFT EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF POLICY AND PUBLIC INITIATIVES PANEL HELD ON 6 MARCH 2019****26. Public Initiatives – The Walls Project**

As part of a public engagement session for the Panel's meeting in September 2018, Nick Chilvers had submitted a proposal to support the small traders operating in Sir Isaac's Walk, Eld Lane, Trinity Street and Short Wyre Street, Colchester, details of which were included in the agenda for the meeting. An invitation had been extended to Mr Chilvers and Sam Good, Manager of the Colchester Business Improvement District (BID) to discuss the proposal with the Panel members.

Nick Chilvers explained that he had worked in retail for 40 years, managing eight non-food stores in the town centre. He did not consider himself to be an expert, but he had kept in touch with the current situation. He considered that attention should be given to the Walls area of the town rather than solely on the High Street. The area to include Trinity Church and Scheregate Steps as well as Trinity Street, Sir Isaac's Walk, Eld Lane and Short Wyre Street. He was of the view that the area needed a distinctive appearance, investment and an overall plan. He welcomed that umbrella lighting proposal, but it was important to improve the area from end to end. He advocated a collaborative approach between the BID, the Council and traders. He was of the view that the project could provide a tourist destination along the lines of similar areas in Folkestone, Hastings and Brighton with the emphasis on business not events. He suggested that interest needed to be secured from traders and a working party set up. He wished luck to the BID with the project.

Sam Good explained that the BID represented 490 levy payers, the large majority of whom were independent traders and, as such, the Walls Project was very relevant for them. The BID had set up an Independent Focus Group. He considered the Walls Project to be a succession of partnerships with Colchester Borough Council, Colchester Business Enterprise Agency (COLBEA) and other companies. The first stage would be for the Focus Group to look at feasibility, breaking the recommendations into smaller priorities. Several other Focus Groups set up by the BID would also be impacted by the project. He was of the view that the project needed to go back to the drawing board and he welcomed Nick Chilvers expertise and invited him to participate in the Focus Group. He was of the view that the BID would not be able to run the Project on its own and asked for the Council to determine its involvement in the Project. He indicated his willingness to attend future meetings following the undertaking of further research.

Councillor Harris welcomed the proposed Project and the ideas articulated by the two speakers, particularly given the need to compete with the recent impact of online shopping. He suggested that a number of small initiatives could be undertaken in the medium to short term to reinvigorate the town centre whilst further research was ongoing. He considered the Cabinet needed to consider the Project with a view to offering the Council's support.

Councillor Higgins confirmed her interest in the Project and was of the view that practical measures needed to be put in place whilst discussions were ongoing. As an example, she suggested that, if every shop displayed a living plant, this would not be expensive and would not require a significant input from the Council or the BID but would make tangible and visible contribution. She hoped that the BID would encourage all of the shops to participate, not just the independents.

Sam Good responded explaining that the BID was working in partnership with Colchester in Bloom on a BID in Bloom initiative, concentrating in particular areas of the town centre. He

considered the BID had already achieved a lot since its launch four months previously and they had received buy in from the businesses.

Councillor Lissimore welcomed Nick Chilvers' proposals and the work he had already put into the Project. She agreed that it was important to set out priorities for the Project and the need for the initiative to be easy for people to participate.

Councillor Buston welcomed the enthusiasm expressed by Nick Chilvers and was of the view that, generally, initiatives were successful through the drive and leadership of particular individuals. He considered the many small shops within the Walls Project area were different and the traders displayed enthusiasm and entrepreneurship which could be the key to making the Project work. He was also of the view that the Council needed to support the Project.

The Chairman welcomed the invitation extended to Nick Chilvers to participate in the BID's Focus Group meetings and he asked about the BID's Council's relationship with the Council and what could the Council do to make the Project become a reality in the short term.

Sam Good confirmed that the relationship with Council officers had been remarkable in all respects and observers from the Council also attended BID Board meetings in order to prevent any duplication of effort. He confirmed that the BID's relationship with Essex County Council wasn't as close as he would like but acknowledged that this relationship needed to be built upon. Assistance from the Council would be particularly welcome in relation to the area covered by Sir Isaac's Walk and Short Wyre Street to Queen Street and the need to build relationships with the relevant landlords to address the problem of empty units. He advocated the potential need for greater enforcement in order to create greater contribution to the vibrancy of the area.

Councillor Higgins referred to the problem of damage to historic Listed Buildings by large vehicles inadvertently entering the narrow streets within the Walls area due to the current poor visibility and location of signage. She was of the view that an improved relationship with the County Council was likely to improve this issue.

Nick Chilvers agreed with the views expressed by Councillor Higgins in relation to the benefit of small initiatives such as planting. He urged the Council to be willing to contribute funding for this. He referred to the opportunity for groups of traders to be creative and take the initiative to draw people into the shopping areas. He was of the view the BID needed to make sure it didn't spread itself too thinly but to undertake initiatives in manageable chunks.

Councillor Scott-Boutell asked what the BID's top priority would be.

Sam Good confirmed the need to understand the support wanted and needed by the traders themselves. He referred to the need to support improvements to the perception and appearance of the town centre. He also explained the need to build the independent brand and the marketing of the area as a shopping destination by means of various ideas, including bringing online businesses into the town to occupy empty units.

*RESOLVED* that the appreciation of the Panel be extended to Nick Chilvers and Sam Good and the excellent relationship that the BID had with the Council be noted.

*RECOMMENDED* to Cabinet that as much support as possible be provided to the BID in order to secure the success of the Walls Project as quickly as possible