

Policy and Public Initiatives Panel

Wednesday, 19 September 2018

Attendees: Councillor Roger Buston, Councillor Chris Hayter, Councillor Sue Lissimore, Councillor Andrea Luxford Vaughan, Councillor Lee Scordis, Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell
Substitutes: Councillor Adam Fox (for Councillor Dave Harris)
Also Present: Councillor Cory, Councillor Davies, Councillor Goss, Councillor Lilley, Councillor T. Young

10 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2018 were confirmed as a correct record.

11 Public Engagement – Survey Results and Contributions at the meeting

Councillor Buston (by reason of being a member of King Coel's Kittens) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).

Councillor Scordis introduced the Public Engagement report. Councillor Scordis stated that the purpose of this item was to listen to ideas from the public that could be added to the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Work Programme. This would take the form of assessing the online survey responses, listening to members of the public who have attended the meeting as well as looking at any contributions made on flip charts set up in the meeting room.

Councillor Cory, Leader of the Council, attended the meeting and highlighted that the Cabinet were listening to the ideas raised. Councillor Cory welcomed the number of survey responses from members of the public, which totalled 102 submissions. Councillor Cory highlighted issues like heritage and cleanliness, which came up in the online survey were already being brought forward.

Katie Francis

Katie Francis attended the meeting and highlighted that she had submitted her idea through the online survey in advance of the meeting. The idea related to the future agenda item of air quality and regarded the use of green city walls in areas where air

quality is poor.

Katie Francis informed the Panel that the green walls monitor and remove CO2 from the air and can also double up as public seating as well as crash barriers, cladding and in community gardens.

Katie Francis highlighted that there is currently poor air quality in the town centre and green walls would provide a solution that can be quickly installed. A single green wall processes the same amount of CO2 as 275 urban trees. Green walls, alongside seating, also provide advertising space, which would assist in providing a return on the investment. Katie Francis highlighted that Glasgow had invested £40,000 in Green Walls and living walls had also been installed in Cheshire which has had a number of benefits. Following a further query from Panel members, Katie Francis confirmed that green walls had also been installed in Lincoln and the Piccadilly area of London.

Response

Members of the Panel welcomed the contribution from Katie Francis and suggested that information on the green walls be circulated to Panel members.

Councillor Cory also welcomed the contribution from Katie Francis, and highlighted that Green Walls are being looked into by Officers for parts of the Town Centre. Councillor Cory suggested areas like Balkan Hill and the bridge as well as in businesses and car parks could benefit from the use of green walls.

Cassandra Clements, Community Zones Group Manager, confirmed that the Council had started to look into the introduction of these. The focus would be on solutions that are low maintenance and could be linked to fibre internet connections.

Rowena MaCauley

Rowena MaCauley attended the meeting to suggest that the Panel look at the possibility of a new public transport service for the town centre. Rowena MaCauley suggested that this would be in line with Colchester Borough Council aims and objectives and in times of austerity would provide a number of benefits.

It was suggested that the new public transport service would travel around the immediate town centre, including the High Street, Queen Street, Osbourne Street and St Johns. Extensions to the service could also be made so that the bus would run to North Hill and the East Street.

This service would be as free as possible, and could be a shuttlebus service or an electric tram. This would help to alleviate some of the traffic issues that the Town Centre has suffered from for a number of years. This would ensure that those with disability or access issues would be able to travel across the Town Centre with ease and diffuse the need for a central bus station.

Response

Panel members welcomed the suggestion from Rowena MaCauley and the importance of providing a link between Colchester North station and the Town Centre as well as improving accessibility in the Town. A member of the Panel suggested that discussions could take place between CBC and ECC to establish how to get buses to link in to this idea, and also cited an example that there is a free hopper bus in Cambridge.

Mark Goacher

Mark Goacher attended the meeting to suggest that the Council looks at how it could significantly reduce the level of glyphosate weed killers used in managing parks and green areas.

Mark Goacher informed the Panel of a legal case, where Monsanto, the company that owns the weed killer brand Roundup, were taken to court and required to pay £289m in damages to a former schools groundskeeper as jurors ruled that Roundup gave him terminal cancer. Mark Goacher highlighted that whilst Monsanto are going to challenge the result, this ruling had led to thousands more legal cases on this issue.

Mark Goacher highlighted that both Essex County Council and Colchester Borough Council use glyphosate in a number of different areas within the Borough including Castle Park and near children's playgrounds. Whilst Mr Goacher acknowledged that it is a cheap way of controlling weeds, it does not fit with the Councils approach to wellbeing. Whilst there is some scientific debate about glyphosates, The World Health Organisation have listed the chemical as potentially carcinogenic.

Mark Goacher also informed the Panel that the use of the glyphosate on farms has increased by 400% over the last twenty years. Farmers will need to change behaviour and public organisations have to set an example. Mark Goacher also highlighted the Manifesto for Wildlife calls for those with gardens to stop using weed killers.

In response to a question from a member of the Panel about alternative options, Mark Goacher stated that the best way forward is to only use glyphosates in areas where it is absolutely necessary for safety reasons. This would mean that some of the areas, particularly where weeds were being removed due to cosmetic reasons, weeds would be left to grow. It would also be possible to use flame throwers, vinegar products or boiling water. There would also be the option to physically remove the weeds, however this would be cost intensive.

Mark Goacher stated that he is not aiming for a complete ban over night, just a view to reduce its usage, particularly in those areas where it is not particularly required.

Response

Cassandra Clements highlighted that a discussion paper on this matter was taken to the previous Portfolio Holder. Since then a discussion has taken place with the ground maintenance contractor to see what alternatives are available. A report on this matter is

being compiled for October.

Members of the Panel welcomed the suggestion from Mark Goacher. Panel members suggested that this matter be discussed with Essex Country Council to establish what can be done, and also to look at Wivenhoe who have stopped using certain products in certain areas.

Katie Francis

Katie Francis spoke to suggest an idea on behalf of Charlotte Winters. Katie Francis stated that the issue that Charlotte Winter wanted to raise was accessibility in Colchester, particularly with regard to housing. A significant number of properties have a step to access the front door which causes accessibility issues. Katie Francis suggested that rules for house construction contained within the Local Plan and the North Essex Garden Communities should be accessible and therefore adaptable as people age.

Katie Francis also stated that it would be beneficial to have a more accessible town centre, as well as an accessibility and mobility consultation.

Katie Francis informed the Panel about Young Arts Kommunity (YAK) at Firstsite and stated that the organisation would be happy to meet with the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel about ideas that young people have for Colchester. This would allow for a more relaxed discussion about ideas and allow for those individuals who would not wish to speak at a Committee meeting to contribute their ideas.

Response

The Panel welcomed the contribution from Katie Francis on behalf of Charlotte Winter. The Panel also discussed and encouraged members to go out and speak to different groups outside of the Town Hall.

With regard to house construction, Councillor Goss confirmed that Colchester Borough Council adheres to the Essex Design Guide and that this matter had been discussed at Local Plan meetings.

Bodo von Broen

Bodo Von Broen, attended the meeting to have his say regarding anti-social behaviour in West Stockwell street area as well as revitalising the High Street. Bodo Von Broen informed the Panel that he is a resident of West Stockwell Street and had witnessed a number of drug dealings in the area which had caused obstacles for their daily lives, but had read in the paper that additional PCSO's are being brought into Colchester, which he welcomed.

Bodo Von Broen also suggested that empty shops in the Town Centre could be used as galleries and by local communities to sell products and hold meetings, which would help to revitalise the area. Mr Von Broen informed the Panel that he was aware of legislation

which would mean that it may not be possible to do this at the moment.

Bodo Von Broen also felt that the corner Queen Street and the High Street was dangerous due to the bus lane and the number of cars that have to turn around.

Response

Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Waste Environment and Transportation thanked Bodo Von Broen for his contribution to the meeting. With regard to the anti-social behaviour in the Dutch Quarter, Councillor Goss confirmed that there were a number of Police Officers in that area recently.

With regard to the bus lane, Councillor Goss confirmed that Essex County Council are looking into the best solution for the Lewis Gardens issue where cars turn around and cause issues. Funding is already in place for this and discussions will take place with Cllr Bentley.

With regard to using empty shop fronts, Councillor Goss highlighted that there are laws around improving shop fronts and the livery. Councillor Goss mentioned that this would be a responsibility for the landlord, but that the Council would be keen to support any moves to deliver this. Zones teams would be able to monitor those shops which are empty, but this issue isn't something that could be fixed overnight.

Richard Volks

Richard Volks, from the Roman Road Residents Association, attended the meeting to have his say echoing the comments regarding issues caused by the bus lane in Lewis Gardens and the fear that another solution could just move the issue along to another location.

Response

Panel members welcomed the contribution from Richard Volks, and acknowledged that officers were aware of the issues at Lewis Gardens and Roman Road. Councillor Goss also noted that the Council are keeping an eye on that area to make sure that Anti-Social Behaviour doesn't increase.

James Cole

James Cole attended the meeting to have his say regarding school and community transport. In particular James Cole explained that he felt the current arrangement for public transport was not ensuring the greatest level of patronage. This was due to several reasons including infrequent services, particularly outside of the school services as well as routes that limited the appeal of buses.

James Cole made a number of proposals about different services in Colchester and how they could be improved and informed the Panel that he had already spoken to Heddingham Buses about some of the ideas.

James Cole stated that in further developing bus services this would improve air quality by removing the number of cars on the road.

Response

The Panel welcomed the contribution from James Cole and acknowledged some of the issues with buses and timetables. Panel members also suggested that given his ideas for bus services in the Borough that he should meet with Councillor Cory and Councillor Bentley to discuss this further.

Councillor Cory thanked James Cole for attending the meeting and informed him that this is an area where Colchester Borough Council would be interested to see what powers are available to them to influence bus services or the creation of a hopper bus going forward. However currently this ability sits with Essex County Council. Councillor Cory highlighted that this was a national issue and one where national funding needed to be increased to support the County Councils and Unitary authorities in supporting bus services.

Panel Discussions – Online Submissions

Panel members welcomed the number of submissions from members of the public. The Panel discussed those issues that had been received through the online survey. The key themes within the submissions included provision of cycling, public transport, electric charging points in car parks, traffic, heritage and tourism as well as anti-social behaviour issues and provision for horse riding.

Panel members welcomed the suggestion around recycling for trade waste. Richard Block, Assistant Director for Environment informed the Panel that the Waste and Zones Scoping report would include looking at the range of services provided by the waste team and whether they needed to be changed.

With regard to the ideas submitted around heritage, it was highlighted that there is a task and finish group that will look at heritage going forward.

Those ideas that were within the area of pedestrianisation and air quality could be included in the scope when those reports are brought to the Panel. Councillor Goss suggested that for information regarding pedestrianisation this could include looking at traffic flow, what happened on the previous occasion the High Street was closed to traffic and also involve the Essex County Council Cabinet member.

A further contribution was made by Rowena MaCauley regarding pedestrianisation of the high street and highlighted the difficulty of fixing the Town Centre. Rowena MaCauley stated that whilst she would be in favour of looking to improve the public spaces in the town centre and reduce the amount of traffic, this would be difficult due to the impact on many different areas. Rowena MaCauley stressed the need to hold meaningful consultation about any proposed changes with stakeholders and user

groups.

A member of the Panel highlighted that with regards to pedestrianisation there is no set mindset about the type of pedestrianisation and that the Panel would be looking to speak to a number of different stakeholders.

Following a submission from Bill Gibson regarding a responsible dog ownership strategy. A member of the Panel suggested that this be part of the Policy and Public Initiatives Work Programme.

Panel members also discussed the suggestion of re-introducing the Carnival and the reasons why it was cancelled, which included the cost of insurance and the difficulty in finding enough volunteers. Another Panel member highlighted the Samba Rumble event which featured dancers along the carnival route rather than floats, which reduced the cost of insurance.

In response to an online submission regarding brownfield sites for the development of box parks. Councillor Cory, stated that Councillor Bourne has been looking into alternative solutions to provide more Council Housing by installing pre-fabricated units on the top of buildings. These can be installed in 24-48 hours and would not have a significant impact on the existing residents. This could be delivered through the housing company rather than right to buy through the Council, as there is currently a limit on the borrowing headroom for new Council Houses.

A member of the Panel highlighted that there were a number of submissions from members of the public in areas which were not within the remit of Colchester Borough Council, such as setting business rates. It was suggested that these issues could be addressed to either the local MP or to the Cabinet member at Essex County Council.

Councillor Cory stated that whilst the Council does not have responsibility for all areas, there is some focus taking place on what the Council can do and whether powers could be devolved. Councillor Cory highlighted the match funding for the Local Highways Panel. In terms of business rates, Colchester Borough Council is currently looking in to joining the Essex pilot for business rate retention. Whilst this will assist with bringing more money into the local economy, the valuation for business rates is something that is set at the national level.

Members of the Panel expressed their thanks for the time members of the public took in responding to the survey and submitting their ideas. Panel members suggested that those who submitted their ideas should be contacted and updated about the items being progressed.

With regard to the ideas going forward, it was suggested that given the number of responses around public transport and cycling that these issues be merged into a sustainable transport item. This could also look at the use of electric vehicles, cycling

and walking.

Panel members also acknowledged the submission from Nick Chilvers regarding the Town Walls, and suggested that it would be useful to invite the Business Improvement District to the meeting to discuss the potential for this area. Panel members agreed that this be requested for inclusion on the Panel's work programme.

It was also agreed that the responsible dog ownership policy be reviewed, providing information on what the current policy is and what options there are moving forward and what other Councils do to assist with dog ownership. This could include those issues seen at Mill Road Rugby club.

Panel Discussion – Flip Chart Submissions

The Panel also considered those items that were raised by using the flip chart.

The Panel discussed those items which had been written on the flip charts provided in the room. This included subsidising the train services between Colchester North and Town Stations, as well as using environmentally friendly furniture to replace current stock when it reaches end of life, the use of solar panel lampposts and lighting and open-mic meetings for community groups to attend the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel.

Members of the Panel welcomed the use of the flip charts, which allowed members of the public to write down any information that they wanted to without the need to speak at the meeting as this can be intimidating. Councillor Cory welcomed the inclusive approach of using the flip charts throughout the meeting. Councillor Cory also suggested the approach of not using gender pronouns for members of the public at meetings and stated that this would be something that he would look into for use in Council meetings.

Councillor Goss confirmed that transport between Colchester North station and the Town Centre could be discussed at future stakeholder meetings with Greater Anglia and the bus companies.

Andre Hansford

Andre Hansford addressed the Panel and welcomed the ability to write ideas for consideration onto the flip chart as the meeting progressed rather than formally addressing the meeting.

With regard to the other items that were raised by members of the public at the meeting, including weed killer, green walls, and empty shops, the Chairman highlighted that these issues were being addressed by Officers and Portfolio Holder.

RESOLVED that;

- a) The Panel expressed their thanks to the members of the public who submitted

their ideas through the online survey and through Have Your Say for the Panel's consideration.

- b) The Panel *RECOMMENDED* to CABINET that;
 - a. Sustainable Transport
 - b. Responsible Dog Owners Policy
 - c. Invitation to the Business Improvement District to attend a future Policy and Public Initiatives Panel meeting regarding enhancing the Walls in the Town Centre.

12 Waste & Zones Futures Scope

Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation, Richard Block, Assistant Director for Environment and Ann Hedges, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report. The report requests that the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel considers and comments on the proposed scope of the Waste and Zones futures.

Councillor Goss informed the Committee that this was one of the larger reviews taking place with the Council. The service has a direct cost of £8.6m with an income contribution of £4.7m. Councillor Goss explained that the review provides an opportunity to see what new areas of work are emerging, how to plan for the continuing housing and population growth and to see how the services could work better together.

Members of the Panel were informed about those items which would not be included within the scope, which included fleet and ground maintenance contracts. The waste collection methodology would also be excluded from the review due to the fact that the new system was only recently introduced.

Councillor Goss confirmed that the focus of the work is to see how the services could work better together, for example the waste and zones teams. In addition, the review would also look at the Colchester part of the Shrub End Depot.

The Panel thanked Councillor Goss and the Officers for attending the meeting and providing a scoping report for the review. A member of the Panel welcomed the focus on engaging with members of staff throughout the review and questioned when members of staff would be informed of the review. Ann Hedges confirmed that briefings had taken place with managers of Waste, Zones and Parks the day before this meeting, and waste crews were being informed the morning following the meeting. Engagement with members of staff would also involve undertaking several workshops with the crews.

Following a query regarding recycling credits, Richard Block confirmed that they are looking into this matter and making sure that Colchester gets a fair deal, however this is primarily managed by the Waste Disposal Authority. Conversations will also be needed with Essex County Council with regards to population growth within the Borough.

With regard to the timescale of the review, Richard Block confirmed that the intention is to develop a business case and respond to concerns and questions raised by staff by Christmas. The intention would be to then bring a report to the Scrutiny Panel in January before a decision is made at Cabinet.

In response to a further question around longer term thinking, Ann Hedges acknowledged that the current service is close to capacity and this review would look to ensure that the capacity remains sufficient for future operation.

Members of the Panel welcomed the work of the zones teams across Colchester, comments were made that some zones work better than others, but this may be a result of the demands on each area. Ann Hedges stated that whilst the review would look at zones the focus would be on ensuring that the system works better and there is less duplication between waste and zones teams.

A member of the Panel was pleased with the suggestion that there would be no charge for replacement equipment, and that outsourcing was not being considered.

RESOLVED that the Panel considered and commented on the Waste and Zones Futures Scope.

13 Central Support Futures Scope

Dan Gascoyne, Assistant Director for Policy and Corporate, introduced the Central Support Futures Scope report. The report requests that the Panel consider and comment on the proposed scope of the Central Support Futures review.

Dan Gascoyne explained that the central support services encompass those that provide services to other areas of the Council. This includes Human Resources, ICT, Governance and Finance. Dan Gascoyne highlighted that whilst the initial target for the review was to save £150,000, following further discussions £250,000 has been established as more realistic and sustainable. This is due to additional costings within the HR Service Centre and other residual savings figures. Dan Gascoyne acknowledged that it would not be easy to meet the target as the services are already lean and already under pressure. The focus of the review would be delivering better ways of working, rather than salami slicing.

As part of the early stages of the review, a survey was conducted with managers from other areas of the Council to rate the central support services. Analysis on the results of this have been positive. Dan Gascoyne also informed the Panel that there have been a number of engagement sessions with staff.

Dan Gascoyne also highlighted the strategic elements of the report, including the ICT strategy 2019-22 which will continue the work of embedding the new technologies and making ICT most effective as well as further development of the iTrent payroll system.

There is also work being undertaken on a potential shared payroll service with Epping Forest District Council and Braintree District Council.

Panel members welcomed the report presented to them. A Panel member expressed the need to ensure that ICT software used by the Council as part of the ICT Strategy 2019-22 was intuitive and served the purpose of its users.

Another member of the Panel welcomed the way in which the review would be conducted focusing on reviewing the ways of working rather than salami slicing. A further point was made regarding ensuring that in delivering the savings required it does not have a detrimental effect on the service and that this be reflected in the report that is sent to Scrutiny and Cabinet. Dan Gascoyne acknowledged the input from the Panel member and highlighted that the aim is to achieve a sustainable budget and maintaining the relationship to other services without transferring the costs.

RESOLVED that the Panel considered and commented on the Central Support Futures Scope.

14 Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Work Programme 2018-19

Jonathan Baker, Democratic Services Officer, introduced the Policy and Public Initiatives Work Programme. The report requests that the Panel note the contents of the Committee's Work Programme for 2018-19.

Panel members agreed that the Air Quality item could be brought to the next meeting in November, with reports on Pedestrianisation and Unitary Authorities brought to the January meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED that

- a) A report on Air Quality be brought to the November meeting of the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel
- b) Reports on Pedestrianisation of the High Street and Unitary Authorities be brought to the November meeting of the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel
- c) The Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Work Programme be noted.