

Scrutiny Panel Meeting

**Online Meeting,
Tuesday, 07 July 2020 at 18:00**

The Scrutiny Panel examines the policies and strategies from a borough-wide perspective and ensure the actions of the Cabinet accord with the Council's policies and budget. The Panel reviews corporate strategies that form the Council's Strategic Plan, Council partnerships and the Council's budgetary guidelines, and scrutinises Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decisions which have been called in.

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

You have the right to observe all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Cabinet including those which may be conducted online such as by live audio or video broadcast / webcast. You also have the right to see the agenda (the list of items to be discussed at a meeting), which is usually published five working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published. Dates of the meetings are available here:

<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/MeetingCalendar.aspx>.

Occasionally certain issues, for instance, commercially sensitive information or details concerning an individual have to be considered in private. When this is the case an announcement will be made, the live broadcast will end and the meeting will be moved to consider the matter in private.

Have Your Say!

The Council welcomes contributions in the form of written representations from members of the public at most public meetings. Each representation may be no longer than three minutes (or 500 words, if a written submission). Written submissions must be submitted via the form accessed by this link, before noon on the working day before the meeting date: [Scrutiny Panel Have Your Say!](#) If you wish to speak in person to the Panel, you must register your wish by noon on the previous working day, by emailing democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk, and include a written copy of what you wish to say, in case technical difficulties prevent you joining the meeting. The Chairman will invite members of the public to make their representations at the start of the meeting.

If you would like to submit representations to a meeting and need to find out more, please refer to the Have Your Say! arrangements here:

<https://colchester.cmis.uk.com/colchester/HaveYourSay.aspx>.

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Scrutiny Panel – Terms of Reference

1. To fulfil all the functions of an overview and scrutiny committee under section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and in particular (but not limited to):

- (a) To review corporate strategies;
- (b) To ensure that actions of the Cabinet accord with the policies and budget of the Council;
- (c) To monitor and scrutinise the financial performance of the Council, performance reporting and to make recommendations to the Cabinet particularly in relation to annual revenue and capital guidelines, bids and submissions;
- (d) To review the Council's spending proposals to the policy priorities and review progress towards achieving those priorities against the Strategic and Implementation Plans;
- (e) To review the financial performance of the Council and to make recommendations to the Cabinet in relation to financial outturns, revenue and capital expenditure monitors;
- (f) To review or scrutinise executive decisions made by Cabinet, the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee (in relation to decisions relating to off-street matters only) and the Colchester and Ipswich Joint Museums Committee which have been made but not implemented referred to the Panel pursuant to the Call-In Procedure;
- (g) To review or scrutinise executive decisions made by Portfolio Holders and officers taking key decisions which have been made but not implemented referred to the Panel pursuant to the Call-In Procedure;
- (h) To monitor the effectiveness and application of the Call-In Procedure, to report on the number and reasons for Call-In and to make recommendations to the Council on any changes required to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the process;
- (i) To review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of functions which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet;
- (j) At the request of the Cabinet, to make decisions about the priority of referrals made in the event of the volume of reports to the Cabinet or creating difficulty for the management of Cabinet business or jeopardising the efficient running of Council business;

2. To fulfil all the functions of the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee ("the Committee") under the Police and Justice Act 2006 and in particular (but not limited to):

- (a) To review and scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of those functions by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions;
- (b) To make reports and recommendations to the Council or the Cabinet with respect to the discharge of those functions.

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
Scrutiny Panel
Tuesday, 07 July 2020 at 18:00

The Scrutiny Panel Members are:

Councillor Lewis Barber
Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor Tina Bourne
Councillor Paul Dundas
Councillor Chris Hayter
Councillor Mike Hogg
Councillor Sam McCarthy
Councillor Lorcan Whitehead

Deputy Chairman

The Scrutiny Panel Substitute Members are:

All members of the Council who are not Cabinet members or members of this Panel.

AGENDA
THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING
(Part A - open to the public)

Please note that Agenda items 1 to 5 are normally dealt with briefly.

Live Broadcast

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

<https://www.youtube.com/user/ColchesterCBC>

1 Appointment of Chairman

To appoint a Chairman for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

2 Welcome and Announcements (Virtual Meetings)

The Chairman will welcome members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and remind those participating to mute their microphones when not talking. The Chairman will invite all Councillors and Officers participating in the meeting to introduce themselves. The Chairman will, at regular intervals, ask Councillors to indicate if they wish to speak or ask a question and Councillors will be invited to speak in turn by the Chairman. A vote on each item of business will be taken by roll call of each Councillor and the

outcome of each vote will be confirmed by the Democratic Services Officer.

3 Substitutions

Councillors will be asked to say if they are attending on behalf of a Committee member who is absent.

4 Urgent Items

The Chairman 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.

5 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 pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest.

6 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Councillors will be invited to confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2020 are a correct record.

Minutes of Scrutiny Panel meeting 1 June 2020

9 - 18

7 Have Your Say! (Virtual Meetings)

Members of the public may submit one written submission of no more than 500 words for consideration by the meeting which must be submitted online by noon on the working day before the meeting date. The Chairman will read out each submission either at the start of the meeting if it relates to a general matter or immediately before the officer presentation if it relates to an item of business being considered at the meeting.

8 Decisions taken under special urgency provisions

The Councillors will consider any decisions by the Cabinet or a Portfolio Holder which have been taken under Special Urgency provisions.

9 Cabinet or Portfolio Holder Decisions called in for Review

The Councillors will consider any Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decisions called in for review.

10 Items requested by members of the Panel and other Members

(a) To evaluate requests by members of the Panel for an item relevant to the Panel's functions to be considered.

(b) To evaluate requests by other members of the Council for an item relevant to the Panel's functions to be considered.

Members of the panel may use agenda item 'a' (all other members will use agenda item 'b') as the appropriate route for referring a 'local government matter' in the context of the Councillor Call for Action to the panel. Please refer to the panel's terms of reference for further procedural arrangements.

11 Pre-Scrutiny of Proposed changes to Garden Waste Collection 19 - 38

This report outlines proposed changes to the Council's arrangements for collection of residential garden waste.

12 Work Programme 2020-21 39 - 52

This report sets out the current Work Programme 2020-2021 for the Scrutiny Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.

13 Exclusion of the Public (Scrutiny)

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential 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)**

SCRUTINY PANEL

1 June 2020

Present: - Councillor Davies (Chairman), Councillor Bentley, Councillor Bourne, Councillor Dundas, Councillor Hayter, Councillor Hogg,

Substitutions: - None.

Also present: - Councillor Cory, Councillor King, Councillor Scordis, Councillor Warnes, Councillor J. Young

257. Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Beverly Davies be appointed Chairman for the ensuing Municipal Year.

258. Appointment of Deputy Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Kevin Bentley be appointed Deputy Chairman for the ensuing Municipal Year.

259. Minutes of Previous meetings

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 28 January 2020 and 5 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

260. Decisions taken under special urgency provisions

The Chairman drew attention to the two decisions listed in the report for item 12 on this agenda and notified the Panel of a further decision taken under special urgency provisions, relating to the validation and disbursement of Government Discretionary Business Grants.

261. Council response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Councillors Bentley, Dundas and Hogg (by reason of running companies in receipt of government grants administered by the Council) declared pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).

Councillors Bourne and Davies (by reason of being trustees of charities in receipt of rate relief) declared pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).

Confirmation had been given by the Monitoring Officer that the aforementioned interests, whilst pecuniary, did not prevent the Councillors in question from participating in this item.

Councillor Mark Cory, Leader of the Council, introduce the report on the Council's response to the Covid-19 situation. The Council had responded to ensure provision of vital services in the safest possible way. Key focus had been given to the organisation, to business and to housing.

Organisational change involved swift adaption, from a swift move to home working (coming into effect on 16 March), surveying of staff members and heavy reliance on the digitalisation and move to cloud working undertaken by the Council. Necessary hardware and software had been introduced to allow customer services officers to work from home.

Extra cleaning had been in effect prior to lockdown, and where services had then been closed or reduced, staff were redeployed, where possible, to vital services. A clear Red/Amber/Green system had been introduced for use on social media to show the status of each service. Councillor Cory thanked the Council's staff and councillors, detailing cross-party work carried out with group leaders to bring in furlough where services were closed.

It was estimated that over 98% of companies eligible for rate relief had been guided to access this. A discretionary 5% extra funds available had been used to support employers which had not been eligible for funding disbursed in the first round of grant distribution. £30m of government support had been disbursed via the Council. It was also confirmed that the Council had provided a £9,000 grant to Colbea to assist their work in supporting local small business incubation.

Work on housing had been carried out by the Council and Colchester Borough Homes (CBH), with an additional 32 homeless individuals housed. CBH CEO, Gareth Mitchell, had worked closely with Cabinet on this and CBH had maintained proactive contact with its vulnerable residents.

The Council had worked with Police and community partners within the One Colchester Partnership as an example of strong partnership working, helping thousands of people. The NHS, Police, cultural, charitable and local government bodies have come together, co-ordinated by the Council and Community360. Councillor Cory thanked the work of the partners and Community360 and stressed his pride in the partnership and cross-party working.

Adrian Pritchard, Chief Executive, summarised the situation facing families, communities, local businesses and the Council. Government directions had been followed closely and each area of the Council's focus had been taken on by a member of the Executive Management Team. A number of decisions had been made by the Chief Executive under emergency powers, however he welcomed a return to the normal conducting of formal governance processes.

The Chief Executive echoed Councillor Cory's praise of the partnership approach across organisations, firms and the Council, and gave examples of such work.

A Panel member praised the responses seen from Council officers and members of the public. A request was made for a full decision log to be published, giving details of decisions, who took them, when and why they were necessary.

The Council's approach to waste collection was noted and a question asked as to why a different approach had been taken compared to some other neighbouring local authorities. In response, The Leader elaborated on the explanation that had been given by the Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation and the Assistant Director (Environment) and provided to councillors. The temporary suspension of recycling collections had been introduced as a safety measure to avoid having three officers within one vehicle cab and to avoid spreading the virus. The government's guidance had been discussed with other local authorities and, in Colchester, it had been decided that the safety issues, combined with a significant loss of staff to shielding/self-isolation, necessitated the reduction of recycling collections, and a temporary pausing of the collection of garden waste. It was noted that the County Council had also closed waste centres as a safety measure. The Leader noted that other authorities may have chosen a different balancing between meeting targets and increasing safety measures.

Black bag waste collections had been maintained, and the Council had conducted communications efforts to notify residents of arrangements and of re-introduction of services. Dan Gascoyne, Chief Operating Officer, offered a written response to give additional detail, if this was desired. The Council had been an early adopter of measures such as staggered working times and other safety actions in a sustainable fashion, ensuring waste round completions and operations in line with best practice.

It was queried as to why the report did not state that recycling services had been completely suspended between 24 March and 14 April. The reasons for disruptions to the service (e.g. 57 officers (47% of the workforce) shielding or on sick leave and safety concerns) were accepted, but it was requested that the report make clear that there had been a suspension of service. The Leader noted that this was touched upon but agreed that it would help for more detail to be given. It was noted that the dates of suspension were provided in the appendix to the report, but not in the report itself.

It was questioned whether councillors and officers felt that partnerships have strengthened and whether partner organisations had risen to challenges. It was asked whether new initiatives could be identified and introduced for each phase of the Council's response. It was explained that Pam Donnelly, Strategic Director of Customer and Relationships, had built on deep foundations of existing partnerships to further strengthen them and progress recovery operations. Connections via the Town Deal Board and One Colchester Partnership had been key in reacting to Covid-19, supporting employers and maintaining the promotion of local business.

The cross-party working with all party groups was roundly praised as having been effective and successful. The new leaders of the Conservative and Highwoods Independent groups had been included in briefings and discussions, as well as helping to scrutinise decision making. Councillor Paul Dundas, Conservative Group Leader, explained that the discussions held had been very informative, provided additional information and allowed for real debate to be held.

The work of Community 360 and the circulation of information to councillors was praised. The Council's signposting of advice to businesses was picked out by one

member and extolled as being better than the advice provided by central government. The scrutiny provided to emergency decision making was noted as being important to ensure good governance. Praise was also given to the Council Team which administered business rates and grants. Recipients of grants included charities and other not-for-profit organisations including village halls, play groups and community groups. Whilst much had worked well, the Panel noted that it would be important to look back and identify where measures were less successful and how these could be improved.

The swift adaption of Council services was praised, as were the efforts by Cabinet and officers to keep councillors apprised of developments, changes, advice and general information.

Regarding the housing of homeless people, a Panel member asked if the greater-than-expected number housed indicated that there was a hidden problem of homelessness, including those who were not street homeless, but may be 'sofa surfing' or staying with friends or family on a short-term basis. It was also asked whether the recent provision of additional emergency accommodation could generate learning points to help the Council and CBH to build on their ongoing efforts to house those without accommodation. The Leader underlined the national issues of homelessness, the need to support those with mental health needs and the need to increase housing supply. Short term opportunities, such as the temporary use of Elfreda House as emergency accommodation, would need to be replaced with longer-term capacity. Government was giving a more supportive line on assisting with plans to do this and it was stressed that a key part of the solution would be to increase the stock of Council-owned, affordable rental housing.

Councillor Adam Fox, Portfolio Holder for Housing, gave an overview of the work carried out to provide additional emergency accommodation and to tackle 'hidden' homelessness, which was often difficult to identify. Concern over isolation and the short-term nature of where some 'hidden' homeless individuals were finding shelter had led to a higher-than-expected demand. Government had indicated a realisation of the level of support needed by local authorities to finance the supply of housing and support services, with recent announcements on plans to provide support. The Council had been well supported by Government grant funding over recent years.

Regarding the emergency decision-making powers and governance arrangements engaged during the Covid-19 crisis, a request was made for a full explanation to be included in the report. The Leader agreed that it was vital to be clear as to how decision making had been carried out. The Chief Executive noted that the briefing on the emergency powers and governance which had been sent to all councillors could be reflected and reproduced in this report, along with a clarified list of decisions taken, as requested by the Panel.

A Panel member asked if there were any concerns about potential challenges as the Council moved into the phase of gradual easing of lockdown restrictions. The Leader gave assurance that a recovery report was to be presented to Cabinet and that this would be available for councillors to scrutinise. There was concern at the potential speed of lockdown easing, and the risks attached to this. The Council was looking to reopen, and help firms reopen, in line with government guidance and advice.

It was hoped that new approaches and ways of working developed in recent months could be carried on in the future, where this would be beneficial. The Leader informed the Panel that he would be discussing transport and travel approaches with Group Leaders and Councillor Kevin Bentley, County Council Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, at a meeting the following day.

Councillor David King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, provided information on staff absence and safety measures. An absence rate of up to 9% had been recorded, including Covid-19 absences. No members of staff were currently absent due to suspected or confirmed contraction of Covid-19. 64 members of staff had notified the Council that they had self-isolated and around 80 officers were currently absent from work, having reduced over time. Staff have shown a commitment to providing services and many with non-serious ailments have kept working from home where possible.

Regarding Town Centre safety, much work had been done by the Council and businesses to allow for the delivery of a safe shopping environment. Confidence in the safe resumption of business is recognised as being vital.

In response to concerns raised about the possibility that the 15 July 2020 Full Council meeting would be a quorate meeting, rather than for all councillors to attend, the Chief Executive gave assurance that this had been a fall-back option if necessary, but that the provisions made for online meetings meant that it was expected that all councillors would attend Full Council as normal, albeit attending remotely.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that:

- (a) A full decision log be published, showing all decisions taken under emergency powers and detailing who took them and why they were necessary.
- (b) Content be added to 5.10 of the Cabinet report 'Council response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)' to clarify that some recycling collections had been suspended for a period, giving the dates between which collections were suspended, and explaining that this was due to a combination of Government requirements to socially distance,, and due to a significant percentage of staff having been required to shield or self-isolate.
- (c) Details of the Council's emergency powers provisions be appended to the Cabinet report 'Council response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)'

RESOLVED that the Panel expressed its thanks to all staff for their work to cope with the effects of Covid-19.

262. Budget Changes 2020-21 and Budget Strategy 2021-22

Councillor Lewis Barber attended and, with the Chairman's permission, addressed the Panel. Councillor Barber requested clarity relating to the shareholder agreement for the North Essex Garden Communities (NEGC) Ltd and the process going

forward. Councillor Barber expressed the view that the Conservative Group on the Council was in favour of winding up the company, following the recent letter from the Planning Inspector.

Councillor Barber posited that the shareholder agreement was opaque and that it would be beneficial for a summary to be produced and an explanation of what the Council can do in the future regarding decision making, and the implications of the decision not to approve the £350k funding request made in the previous year [2019]. Councillor Barber queried what the implications and liabilities would be relating to the shareholder agreement.

Councillor King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, explained that the partner local authorities, alongside central government, had taken the approach they did to meet the legal duty of co-operation between neighbouring authorities to meet housing needs. They had formed the joint approach, as detailed in the shareholder agreement. It was conceded that it was possible that this could have been better signposted and explained to councillors, but that the joint working would continue until such time as the agreement may be dissolved. The Portfolio Holder offered to circulate an explanation to councillors.

Next steps would involve consultations and decisions being taken to make modifications to the local plan. It would be possible to continue with a single garden community, as recommended by the Planning Inspector, and to continue to work with neighbouring local authorities, albeit in different ways. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that NEGC Ltd would need to address any changes in the respective local plans and explain how it was meeting these changes. All partner authorities would need to then agree to the proposed changes and the re-costing, with the Council liable for an eighth of the overall cost. It was noted that the cost was small, relative to the overall needs addressed by the NEGC Project.

The Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources presented the report. Scale, judgement and risk were the three key considerations in the early stages of economic and health crises, the pace and depth of which were unprecedented. A huge challenge was faced and cross-party input to the response had been welcomed. The Council's financial planning would continue to evolve, be tested and explained as the situation changed.

Paul Cook, Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer, presented the report, detailing the initial figures and emerging position. It was hoped that the actual situation will be better than feared, however a prudential approach was being taken.

The Council's revenue depends on fee income, and the losses of fee incomes over recent months were highlighted. The forecast income loss for the year 2020/21 was being estimated at £9.392m. Business rate relief and continued payment of the expected rate income would help, as the Council would not need to collect business rates and would so avoid collection costs.

The Head of Finance informed the Panel that the Council had confirmed a government grant of £173k had been received in order to assist the restarting of the High Street/Town Centre. Further possible ways to raise finance through increased

charges were mentioned, and it was possible that the government may revisit the rules governing the setting of Council Tax. The budget assumption which had been made was for the use of £8.350m of reserves in 2020/22 and the new Strategic Priorities and Budget Strategy were being considered for any revisions to reflect the evolving situation.

The Panel sought clarity as to whether the projected loss of £9.392m in 2020/21 included the increase in costs experienced by the Council. The Head of Finance explained that the additional costs were forecast at around £500k for 2020/21, and that he could provide a breakdown of this figure if members required this.

A Panel member noted that the drop in the collection rate for Council Tax had so far only been around 5% but that it was likely to deteriorate in coming months, in the light of likely job losses across the economy. It was queried whether the Council had carried out a worst-case scenario exercise and for how long the Council's leisure and cultural services could survive without income. The Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources explained that each service was being examined, that it would take over a year to fully return to service provision and that the Council was looking at ways to continue to provide services in an affordable fashion.

The Head of Finance described work being done by the Essex Finance Officers' Association to look at financial impacts and effects. It was impossible to judge the long term based on the first few months of the current crisis. Income actuals were being monitored and the forecast for each service was slightly different from its profile. The uncertainty in the future was underlined by the Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, and Dan Gascoyne, Chief Operating Officer, described the scenario modelling which had been carried out, on a range of scenarios from good to very challenging. The figures presented were those for the scenario thought to be most likely and were continually being updated as government action and directives are brought in. Some of the main income streams for the Council were detailed. It was queried as to whether the Panel could pre-scrutinise disaster recovery and scenario planning work.

Officers were asked whether the Council was experiencing any positives or negatives in comparison to other local authorities, and whether thought had been given to a redesign of service provision to allow for co-production of services by the Council, councillors, partner organisations and the public. The Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources and the Chief Operating Officer explained that this was desirable but that this was being done carefully, in partnerships such as the Town Deal Board. Experience showed strong partnership working in Colchester and that the recovery work and re-shaping of service provision would draw on this.

The Panel explored the economic principles at play, including price elasticity of services provided, and queried what services and schemes may need to be cut within the year, and what projects may expect to be cut in the future due to a drop in New Homes Bonus money. The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that no projects had been suspended or cancelled, but it was cautioned that there would be less funding available for project work in the future, and that this would reduce the amount of such work that would be possible. It was noted that there were some projects ready to deliver which may attract increased investment.

Panel members requested detail on the cash flow situation at the Council's wholly-owned companies and on expected parking revenue. It was queried whether inflationary pressures were likely to affect the Council.

The Panel queried the information provided about NEGC Ltd and requested clarification regarding the recommended release of the withheld £350k contribution from the Council to the funding of NEGC Ltd and the reasons for this, including the need to ensure goodwill between partner authorities.

The Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources recommended providing figures on parking income at a future meeting of the Panel and acknowledged the need to test medium-term aspirations and priorities. Regarding NEGC Ltd, it was explained that the recommended contribution was to pay the Council's share and to be fair to its partner authorities, with the Council acting as banker for the project. The Chief Operating Officer assured the Panel that a recovery report was to be presented to Cabinet and that this would then be brought to the Panel.

In response to questions about whether extra government support was likely, the Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources paid tribute to actions already taken by government but accepted that there was a limit to what additional help could be expected. Not all additional costs on the Council would be covered by government funds. The Chief Operating Officer explained that it was not expected that there would be any significant increase in government grants to meet ongoing costs. Funding already received by the Council included £76k from the first tranche of £1.6bn, and £2m from the second tranche. An additional £174k has been made available to spend on work to restart the Town centre. No local authority would receive full recompense for lost income, and it was expected that around 20% of the Council's lost income would be covered. The Panel stressed the need to communicate any potential reductions in service that may be necessary in light of lost income.

It was asked how reliant the scenario planning was on Bank of England forecasts. It explained that a gradual recovery curve was expected and that there was confidence in the local economy of the South East compared to elsewhere.

The Chief Operating Officer took questions regarding consultation with trade union representatives, explaining that all changed to service provision had been and would be taken in consultation with the trade unions.

The use of reserves was explained. This would give the Council time to look at its 16 main income streams and the scale of recovery work needed. It would still be possible to address future calls on reserves to address distinct needs or further support services.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that:

- (a) Paragraph 2.5 of the Cabinet report 'Covid-19 budget changes 2020/21 and budget strategy 2021/22' be amended, to delete the words 'to enable the recovery of Colchester Council's costs.'

- (b) Current Paragraph 12.3 of the Cabinet report 'Covid-19 budget changes 2020/21 and budget strategy 2021/22' be replaced with 'Release of the contribution will enable the financial position to be put in good order ahead of determining the future action.'

RESOLVED that the Council's financial scenario planning and recovery operations related to Covid-19 be brought to a future Scrutiny Panel meeting.

263. Work Programme.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Panel would meet on 9 June to consider how to redraw the original draft programme to better reflect the need to hold meetings online, and the need to therefore concentrate on a smaller number of topics at each meeting. It was suggested that an additional meeting of the Crime and Disorder Committee could be held to detail the responses to the Covid-19 situation.

A Panel member noted that there had once been a financial scrutiny panel within the Council, and that this might be one way to best continue to scrutinise financial matters.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2020/21 be noted and approved.

Scrutiny Panel

7 July 2020

Item

11

Report of	Assistant Director (Environment)	Author	Rory Doyle ☎ 507855
Title	Pre-Scrutiny of Proposed changes to Garden Waste Collection		
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines proposed changes to the Council's arrangements for collection of residential garden waste.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Panel should consider the proposed changes and whether, from the information available, they will result in a garden waste collection service that is sustainable and fit for the future, and;
- 2.2 Scrutinise the financial implications of the changes proposed and;
- 2.3 Consider any recommendations that the Panel may wish to make to Cabinet.

3. Reason for Scrutiny

- 3.1 To ensure front-line services are designed so they are fit for the future and that adequate financial savings in relation to the service being reviewed are achieved, pre-scrutiny of the draft Cabinet report at Appendix A has been requested.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Panel has been asked to pre-scrutinise the appended report, which is due to go to Cabinet on 8 July 2020, and consider whether to make recommendation on its contents and the decision/s required.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 5.1 The proposals have no equality, diversity or human rights implications.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The implications of the proposed decision, as relating to the [Strategic Plan 2018-21](#) and the New Strategic Priorities are covered within the Cabinet report at Appendix A.

7. Publicity and Consultation Considerations

- 7.1 These considerations are covered within the Cabinet report at Appendix A.

8. Financial, Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing, Health and Safety, Environmental and Sustainability and Risk Management Implications

- 8.1 These considerations are covered within the Cabinet report at Appendix A.

9. Appendix

Appendix A – Cabinet report on proposed changes to garden waste collections

8 July 2020

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Rosa Tanfield & Rory Doyle
Title	Waste and Recycling New Strategic Priority		
Wards affected	All Wards		

 507855

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council's Covid-19 Recovery Programme has prioritised the need to immediately identify new sources of income to meet the significant saving requirements set out in the budget strategy agreed at Cabinet in June, arising from increased costs and loss of income across a wide range of service areas. Furthermore, the current waste and recycling operating model carries risks in relation to staff wellbeing and a lack of service resilience to external factors, exacerbated during the Covid-19 crisis and ongoing restrictions.
- 1.2 This report presents proposals to generate income through a subscription Garden Waste charging model - 'Garden Club', which would include the introduction of wheeled bins, to safeguard the wellbeing of frontline staff handling garden waste.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To introduce an optional subscription service for garden waste collection, using wheeled bins to support staff wellbeing for suitable properties, and cease free collections of garden waste, to help meet the Council's savings requirements post Covid-19.
- 2.2 To delegate to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation the procurement of the appropriate number of wheeled bins, equipment and other capital expenditure as outlined in this paper.
- 2.3 To approve the inclusion of £1.149m in the 2020/21 Capital Programme for wheeled bin purchase (£909,450) and vehicle adaptations (£240,000) as set out in Section 9 of this report.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Retain the current garden waste collection service. To continue as per the existing operating model. This will increase the Medium-Term Financial Forecast pressure in 2022/23 by a further £1.050m and this option provides no additional income or efficiency opportunities. The Council will accept the limited ability to improve performance and retain current levels of risk associated with staff wellbeing, financial sustainability, and service resilience to external factors such as Covid-19.

- 3.2 Stop the collection of garden waste for all residents. Garden waste collection is a non-statutory service. Stopping the service would reduce expenditure by approximately £1m and will contribute to balancing the Medium-Term Financial Forecast. However, the Council will see a decrease in the recorded amount of recycling that the Borough produces, as residents look to either dispose of the garden waste within residual waste (black bags/bins) ending in landfill; an increased risk of fly tipping; and or an increased level of garden waste taken to the Household Waste Recycling Centres. It will also not provide any additional income opportunity and there may be increased revenue costs required to manage any increase in fly-tipped waste.
- 3.3 Provide a Garden Waste Collection Service. As set out in the report, but with no additional offers, services or added value. This option would be to provide a simple chargeable garden waste collection service only, for those wishing to use the service, which would be renewable annually, as set out in this report.

4 Background

- 4.1 The UK's waste hierarchy sets out five steps for dealing with waste ranked according to environmental impact. Waste prevention (reduction), which offers the best outcomes for the environment, is at the top of the hierarchy followed by re-use and then recycling. The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 create a legal requirement for Councils to take account of the waste hierarchy.
- 4.2 In addition to these environmental imperatives, Colchester Borough Council, like many local authorities faces a serious financial situation. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, June Cabinet approved a revised Medium-Term Financial Forecast which sets out a £3.187m budget gap in 2021/2022. It is imperative that the Council continues to facilitate better waste reduction and improves recycling in ways that are financially sustainable in the longer term.
- 4.3 Under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Colchester Borough Council is classed as a Waste Collection Authority, and as such, under section 45(1) has a statutory duty to collect household waste from all domestic properties within its administrative area. Under Section 46(4) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council has specific powers to stipulate:
- The size and type of the collection receptacle(s)
 - Where the receptacle(s) must be placed for the purpose of collection and emptying
 - The materials or items which may or may not be placed within the receptacle(s)
- 4.4 The collection of garden waste is a discretionary service not a statutory service.

5 Impact of the previous waste strategy

- 5.1 In December 2016 Cabinet agreed a new Waste Strategy and a series of changes to the way in which the Borough collects waste and recycling. The decisions taken included the introduction of wheeled bin collections for specific areas of the Borough with one wheeled bin for residual waste and a second optional bin for garden waste.
- 5.2 The changes introduced created two principal methods of collection:

- Wheeled bin collections for specific areas of the Borough; one for residual waste (180 litre) collected fortnightly and a second optional bin for garden waste (240 litre) also collected fortnightly. Residents were able to opt out of having the second bin for garden waste if they had no requirement for garden waste to be collected.
- Residual waste in all other areas collected in black sacks, 3 sacks fortnightly. The size of black sacks limited to 60 litres, so that three equates to 180 litres. Garden waste collected in white sacks, on alternate weeks. White sacks for garden waste provided free of charge with a limit of 4 sacks throughout the year to match the capacity of a 240-litre wheeled bin.

5.3 Wheeled bins were introduced to the following wards in June 2017 after consultation with ward members:

- Mile End
- Greenstead
- Old Heath & The Hythe (excluding The Hythe and Rowhedge)
- Shrub End – particularly the Garrison areas.
- Stanway
- Berechurch

5.4 The changes resulted in 11,932 properties receiving wheeled bin collections in June 2017. Since that date a further 1,007 properties have been added to that number, so the current total is 12,939 properties. 12,241 wheeled bin properties currently opt for a garden waste collection. The additional properties added are mostly new build properties in Mile End.

5.5 57,556 properties in the Borough are still receiving refuse collections using black sacks and garden waste using reusable bags. Over the last 3 years of delivering the revised Waste Strategy, the following issues can be evidenced and summarised:

Issue	Impact
Staff sickness levels	Crews that work on black sacks/garden waste bags have higher level of sickness (11 days per FTE) as a result of Musculoskeletal Injury than those working on wheel bin rounds (8 days per FTE)
Missed bins	Analysis of the levels of missed bins from both forms of collection identify that it is higher on sack rounds than on wheeled bins (e.g. refuse wheeled bin produced 8.21% of reported missed bins but represent 18.35% of the population.)
Health and safety issues	Research has consistently proven that the level of musculoskeletal injuries associated with using wheeled bins are lower.

6. Impact of Covid-19

6.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Council's ability to sustain waste and recycling collections as a result of a significant reduction in staff numbers and the requirement to mitigate the risk of infection spreading throughout the workforce.

6.2 Ahead of and during the lock down period there was a requirement for stringent social distancing measures and so a number of changes were made to the delivery of services, including the pausing and altering of some services.

- 6.3 Refuse and recycling collections have posed a challenge because over 100 staff start work from the Shrub End Depot at the same time of day and then need to sit in very close proximity in collection vehicles. Numerous additional measures have been put in place to protect and support staff members during this period; from the staggering of start times, adapting crewing out areas and providing additional protective equipment.
- 6.4 Despite these measures the service had to be adapted and some recycling collection frequencies reduced. Government guidance on workplace social distancing has required the avoidance of crowding and minimisation of opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres between individuals. This is not possible with a fully manned refuse collection vehicle which requires a driver and 2 or 3 loaders to deliver the normal service. During the peak of the outbreak, to run a full service would have exposed our staff to an unacceptable risk to their health which is why crews in vehicles were reduced and recycling collection frequencies reduced.
- 6.5 From week commencing 22 June 2020, all services, except for textile collection, have been operating and residents are able to place out their waste and recycling material as per their original calendars.
- 6.6 This period of significant and fast operational changes has enabled the team to review and assess services, along with testing alternative models of delivery. It is clear that any measures that can be taken to simplify the operational model for the service would improve service resilience and staff wellbeing.
- 6.7 As set out in the Budget Strategy report elsewhere on the Agenda, the Council's finances are coming under extreme pressure as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is expected that there will be a significant use of one-off reserves of up to £8.350m in 20/21 and 21/22. Losses are also forecast in funding from Business Rates, Council Tax as well as from income earning facilities such as Sport and Leisure, Car Parking, Museums etc. The following table sets out the Medium-Term Financial Forecast reported to June 2020 Cabinet.

Revised MTFF (£m)	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Service costs	23.877	31.202	24.089	24.299	24.589
Covid Impacts	10.112	-7.978	-1.417	-0.700	0.000
Business rates	-5.885	-4.913	-4.956	-5.000	-4.544
Council tax	-12.448	-11.146	-13.029	-13.748	-14.508
Other funding	-6.925	-2.945	-2.940	-2.944	-2.944
Use of reserves	-8.731	-1.033	1.625	1.250	1.250
Savings to find	0.000	3.187	3.372	3.157	3.843

7. New Proposal for Managing Garden Waste

- 7.1 Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the services delivered by the Council, this has also been an opportunity to review, evaluate and gain better insight into service delivery, to focus on priorities and ascertain the true value of the services. The review in relation to garden waste aimed to achieve:
- Improve the health and wellbeing of residents
 - Reduce the environmental impact across the whole of Colchester

- Enable residents to be proud of Colchester and its Council

7.2 In order to achieve these aims, the proposal work towards the following objectives and principles:

- *Colchester is an attractive place to live and visit*
 - Improve customer access to services online
 - Job done right first time and without duplication
 - Optimise systems and technology effectively
 - Improve performance management
 - Develop opportunities to promote Colchester and its green spaces
 - Provide opportunities for communities to be involved in their local areas
- *The Council can adapt to housing growth*
 - Good reporting and monitoring of the services to inform decision making and investment
- *The Council has capacity and resilience*
 - Build financial sustainability
 - Develop income generation to ensure core costs are balanced
- *Staff are healthy, well and engaged*
 - Protect and support the health and welfare of staff
- *The Service is more energy efficient and contributes to reducing climate impact*
 - Enable residents have greater ownership of their waste
 - Enable residents have options in how they manage their waste

8. Garden Waste Collection

8.1 The collection of garden waste is a discretionary service that does not need to be provided by the Council. It is proposed that the Council provides an 'opt in' paid for subscription service for the collection of garden waste. This is seen as a sensible alternative to providing the free service, and one which is provided by most (reportedly 65%) UK local authorities. Crucially, this would create a significant and sustainable new revenue stream that will contribute towards future investment in our services, as well as contributing to the savings required to balance the Council's post-Covid budget. Without this proposal, the Council will need to find significant additional savings from other Council services and quite possibly curtail or cease the service offered in any case. Unlike other UK local authorities, it is proposed that the Council provides a value-added subscription service, as described further in the report.

8.2 With the implementation of the new service residents will have the following choices:

- **Opt in to the new garden waste collection service (Garden Club).** Residents joining at launch will pay £25 in Season 1 and renewal of their annual subscription in Season 2 (April 2021) for a full year will be £50 (equivalent £1 per week). Residents joining after launch will pay a fee depending on which time of year they join as set out in 8.7 below.
- **Join Garden Club with a neighbour.** Residents can join garden club with a neighbour(s) and share the costs. The bin/s will be collected from the kerbside of the registered property and the registered property will be able to enjoy the additional benefits being offered by the Garden Club, sharing these with their neighbour(s).

- **Compost at home with a subsidised composter.** The Council has joined with Love Essex and getcomposting.com to be able to offer Colchester residents access to specially priced environmental products, where a garden composter is a little as £9.50, or cheaper if purchasing two. The products are made from 100% percent recycled plastic, including plastics collected by Councils, as well as industrial waste such as old gas pipes, old wheeled bins and car bumpers.
- **Setting up a community composting scheme.** There are currently no known community composting schemes in Colchester, however it is proposed that a grant fund could be developed, and working with the Community Engagement team, develop the opportunity for groups to set up a community composting scheme. Additionally, the Love Essex Fund, offers microgrants of up to £500, to help organisations and individuals to support residents in reducing their household waste. The next round of funding will be in Autumn 2020.
- **Take waste to the Household Waste Recycling Centres**
- **Pay to dispose of the garden waste privately**

8.3 Given the range of alternative options available to residents and financial savings the Council is required to make, it is proposed that, in introducing the subscription service, the current free collection of garden waste will cease.

8.4 Unlike other Council-run chargeable garden waste collection services which charge solely for a collection service, Colchester residents could opt to join the 'Garden Club' (working title). The Garden Club membership will entitle the household to:

- Garden waste collected on a fortnightly basis
- Garden Club Member exclusive offers, such as:
 - Invitation to talks and demonstrations by specialists such as Park Rangers, Landscape Designers, Tree Officers.
 - Seeds and gardening starter packs
 - Exclusive invitations to planting or project openings/launches,
 - Garden Club Member only events
 - Membership of the new Garden Club Facebook group
 - Preview/pre-booking, before public release for:
 - e.g. 'Trees for Years' or other special events
 - Special offers in association with private sector organisations, such as local garden centres (and other offers/deals as can be negotiated).
 - Regular newsletters providing seasonal advice

8.5 In order for this service to be successful, it is essential that the processes and systems are clear and simple to provide a seamless service. The following sets out a summary of the main elements of the proposed Garden Club service.

8.6 **Launch** - To support the launch of the new service in October 2020, it is proposed that a special one-off price is offered to residents of **£25**. This will include both the set-up fee and membership until March 2021. Residents will be able to sign up to an expression of interest as part of the communication and marketing campaign that is being developed and then officially sign up from September 2020, through to the end of March 2021 (Season 1).

- 8.7 **New customers (after launch)** - Residents wishing to join at Season 2 for April 2021 will be required to pay a 'one off' half price set-up fee of **£12.50** (to purchase and deliver the bin to the property) and they will pay a membership fee relevant to the period in which they sign up as set out below. Residents wishing to join after this period, will then be required to pay a 'one off' set up fee of **£25**:

Sign up between:	Cost
Beginning April – end June	£50 membership fee
Beginning July – end September	£37.50 membership fee
Beginning October – end December	£25 membership fee
Beginning January – end March	£12.50 membership fee

- 8.8 **Existing Garden Club Members** - Garden Club members will be required to renew their membership annually (**£50**). Residents will be contacted throughout February and March to encourage them to renew ahead of the start of the new year in April.
- 8.9 Residents may opt to have more than one garden waste bin, at an additional **£50** per annum per bin (plus **£12.50** cost of supplying the extra bins, if all additional bins are ordered at the same time).
- 8.10 Benchmarking across other local authorities has been carried out and the results are provided in Appendix A. This demonstrates that the costs set out are comparable with those in nearby authorities.
- 8.11 It is proposed that the sign up and renewal process will be completed online, with support provided by the Customer Services Centre as required. All communications to the customer will be via the email address registered at sign up, including the membership offers and deals set out above.
- 8.12 A form of staged payment will be made available to those customers requiring it, from April 2021.
- 8.13 Residents in receipt of certain benefits will be entitled to a reduction in the sign-up fee from April 2021, making the sign-up fee **£7.25** initially and **£12.50** (half price) if signing up beyond April 2021.
- 8.14 **Use of wheeled bins** - The previous introduction of wheeled bins to certain areas of the Borough has provided valuable data to help develop proposals. Implementing wheeled bin collections for garden waste through this project will help improve staff wellbeing and performance. However, there are some areas of the Borough where it may not be practical or suitable for wheeled bins. These areas would need to be retained on a garden sack collection service (either compostable or reusable sacks, that will be supplied as part of the Garden Club membership). The criteria used to determine whether a property is suitable for a wheeled bin are:
- Properties situated on a steep slope may not be suitable
 - Properties accessed by several steps may not be suitable
 - Properties where storage of wheeled bins prevent access to the boundary or safe presentation for bin collections may not be suitable (for example terraced houses directly fronting the street)
- 8.15 **Garden waste collection** - Collection days in Season 1 (October 2020 to March 2021) will remain the same but will be reviewed. Any changes to collection days will be communicated to households that subscribe from the beginning of the new Season. Bins

will be emptied on a fortnightly basis; 25 collections across 50 weeks of the year excluding 2 weeks at Christmas/New Year.

- 8.16 Customers who already have a wheeled bin for garden waste, will be issued with a sticker to be placed on the bin to indicate that they are signed up. Customers who do not have a wheeled bin for garden waste will have one delivered. It may not be a new bin, but it will have been checked and cleaned prior to delivery. The Council may choose to collect existing wheeled garden waste bins from those properties that have not signed up to the service. These would then be cleaned and reissued to customers who have signed up.
- 8.17 Garden waste will only be taken if it is presented in the bin i.e. 'side waste' will not be taken.
- 8.18 The volume and tonnage of garden waste collection is varied depending on time of year and how much rain there is. There are generally increased loads from the start of the growing season in April through to late October after the leaves have fallen. The following table shows totals (kg) collected each calendar year.

Year	Kerbside green waste total (kg)
2018	9,609,540
2017	9,889,140
2016	9,175,640
2015	8,804,100

- 8.19 Following the changes to the service during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the re-introduction of the collection service, the crews have completed two collection cycles since. The weights are set out in the table below, but it should be noted that the first cycle is not representative of the usual amounts collected per cycle (i.e. 2 weeks).

Cycle	Totals (Kg)
1	1,276,040
2	578,120

- 8.20 Based on feedback from other authorities, it is projected that:
- 50% of all residents with a free Garden Waste collection today will want to subscribe – this would result in around 35,000 customers for Colchester (estimated over the next three seasons)
 - 25% of the current Garden Waste will be Composted either at home or via an ECC Recycling Centre
 - 25% of Garden Waste will likely end up in the Black Wheeled Bin

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 The proposals for the introduction of the Garden Club include a range of financial implications, including one-off and ongoing costs, and a requirement for capital investment.

9.2 Revenue Implications

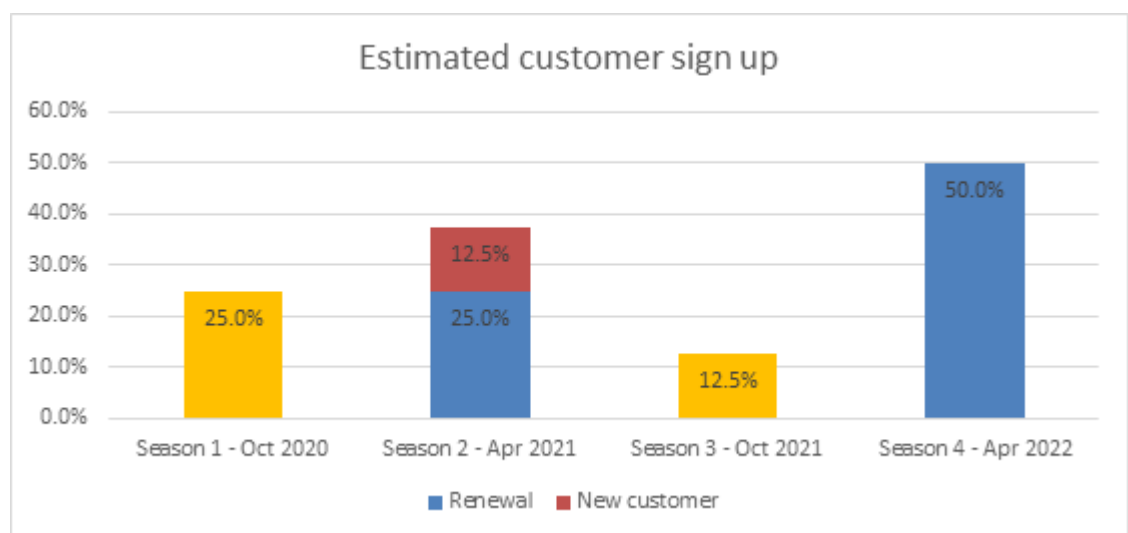
- 9.3 The ongoing revenue implications of the changes set out in this paper primarily revolve around income, supplies & services costs and financing costs.

- 9.4 To deliver sustainable changes, there are additional ongoing costs associated with resource to process financial reconciliation, staged payments, administration, delivery of compostable or reusable bags and contact support for the Garden Club. There is a saving in relation to the purchasing and distribution of re-useable garden sacks.
- 9.5 To deliver the changes there will be several one-off revenue costs incurred. These will include:
- Systems and support development (including online and digital systems)
 - Project support and management
 - Communications and marketing campaign
 - Dedicated Neighbourhood Wardens who will be required as additional temporary resources to accommodate the project requirements.
- 9.6 Any one-off costs of implementation incurred will be met from the Garden Club service income in the year. One-off costs are forecasted at £307,000 in 2020/21 and £118,000 in 2021/22.

9.7 **Garden Waste income**

- 9.8 Income has been estimated with take-up achieving a membership of 50% of all eligible residents by October 2021, renewing in April 2022, in a staged approach. The modelling has been based on the following assumptions and represented in the table below:

- **Season 1** (October 2020): 25% (17,600) of eligible residents will sign up to the new service at £25 (for 6 months)
- **Season 2** (April 2021): Existing members will renew at £50. An additional 12.5% (8,800) new residents signing up for the year (Half price £12.50 sign up and membership fee at £50) (for 12 months)
- **Season 3** (October 2021): An additional 12.5% (8,800) eligible residents will sign up to the new service at £25 sign up and membership fee at £25 (for 6 months).
- **Season 4** (April 2022): All Members (representing 50%) will renew at £50 membership fee



Yellow indicates those customers paying 6 months service

- 9.9 Following new customers signing up in Season 1, 2 and 3, it is expected that 50% of eligible residents will have signed up and will be renewing regularly. As a result, income is forecast to be higher comparably in 2020/21 and 2021/22 than in 2022/23, as there will be

no new customers paying the set-up fee from 2022/23. From 2022/23, the forecast assumes income will be stable at circa £1.6m.

- 9.10 In anticipation that a concession option will be developed, an allowance for this has been made.
- 9.11 The Council currently receives £287,000 of green credit claim income. Forecasting has allowed for a reduction of 50%, however it is not expected that the reduction will be this significant on the basis of the feedback and experience of other local authorities.
- 9.12 The following table sets out the estimated revenue implications of the proposals contained within this report.

Table of Revenue Implications			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Revenue implications	£000s	£000s	£000s
Recurring Expenditure			
Financial reconciliation and stage payment processing	18	46	48
Delivery services	1	1	1
Customer Contact Centre and administration processing	88	153	156
Print and communications	42	76	88
Saving of purchase of hessian sacks	(13)	(27)	(27)
Purchasing of compostable sacks	27	54	54
Financing costs (Minimum Revenue Provision and Interest)	29	154	154
Total expenditure	192	457	474
Income			
Garden Club Membership income (net of concessions)	(991)	(1,845)	(1,625)
Recycling credit income (reduced from non-take up)	72	144	144
Total income	(919)	(1,701)	(1,481)
One-off costs			
Systems development and support	103	14	-
Project Management	72	31	-
Operations & Comms	132	73	-
Total one-off costs	307	118	-
Overall Net Revenue Impact	(420)	(1,126)	(1,007)

9.13 Capital Implications

- 9.14 The capital expenditure requirements of the proposals will include the costs of the purchase of bins and an additional vehicle. It is estimated that this will require capital expenditure of circa £1,149,000 as set out in the table below. The modelling in this report

assumes a 50% take up of eligible residents to the Garden Club (and thus requiring wheeled bins for garden waste), the proposal sets out 60% take up within the capital programme to ensure sufficient resources are approved by Cabinet, should they be required.

Capital Requirements			
Item		Unit Cost (£)	Total (£)
Purchase of bins	Allowing for 60% take up of residents (42,300) requiring a garden waste bin	21.50	0.909m
Adaption of existing fleet	8 vehicles	0.030m	0.240m
Total Capital Provision			1.149m

10. Timetable for service changes

Date	Action
29 June	Scrutiny Panel papers published, proactive comms
30 June	Cabinet papers published
7 July 2020	Scrutiny Panel special meeting (tbc)
8 July 2020	Cabinet decision – press release announcing consultation
July/August 2020	Online ‘expression of interest’ launch for residents
August 2020	Communication and marketing campaign launched
September 2020	Garden Club sign up launched – Season 1
October 2020	Commencement of Garden Club service – Season 1
April 2021	Commencement of Garden Club Service – Season 2

11. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 11.1 A detailed [Equality Impact Assessment](#) has been completed to establish the implications of introducing the services as outlined. The outcome of the assessment demonstrates that there will be limited impact for residents, apart from certain households on a low income.
- 11.2 This impact will be mitigated by introducing a concessionary fee for set up costs and a phased payment method for new customers joining mid-year. In addition, there are multiple alternative options for residents opting not to subscribe to the service.
- 11.3 The Council will continue to support residents who may have difficulty accessing our services, by way of assisted collection schemes and/or direct support from officers, where necessary.
- 11.4 Not all residents benefit from the current garden waste collection service. Fundamentally, the proposal to charge a subscription fee ensures that income is generated from users of the service, rather than the cost being met from the general Council Taxpayer. As a minimum, charges will be reviewed annually as part of the budget and service planning

process. Residents may continue to dispose of garden waste free of charge at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) operated by Essex County Council.

12. Strategic Plan References

12.1 The proposals specifically support the Strategic Plan 2018-21

Responsibility

- The Garden Club promotes responsible citizenship by encouraging residents to get involved in their communities and to identify solutions to local issues through either sharing the service or exploring community composting.
- The proposal in this paper is fundamentally designed to encourage re-use and recycling to reduce waste to landfill

Opportunity

- The Garden Club is an example of an initiative to help residents live healthier lives, and the introduction of wheeled bins for garden waste will support our staff to do so, many of whom are residents

13. Consultation

- 13.1 The Council's Covid-19 Recovery Programme has intensified the need to immediately identify new sources of income to meet the significant budget pressure as set out in the budget strategy agreed at Cabinet in June and set out elsewhere in this report. The current waste and recycling operating model also creates risks to the Council in relation to staff wellbeing and the lack of service resilience to external factors as set out in this report.
- 13.2 This paper will be subjected to pre-scrutiny at the Council's Scrutiny Panel meeting on 7 July 2020 and the Panel's recommendations will be made available to Cabinet in considering this report.
- 13.3 An online 'expression of interest' programme will be launched throughout July and August enabling residents to register to receive more information about the service and to express an interest for signing up. This will provide an opportunity for officers to gain customer insight to further inform the service design and delivery, and gauge potential uptake.

14. Publicity Considerations

- 14.1 The waste and recycling service serves every household every week and changes will need to be clearly communicated. Given the level of change we need to use many different communication mechanisms to make sure every household hears about and understands the changes. A full communications plan, as outlined below, will be developed and put in place.
- 14.2 The main roll-out of the Garden Club communications strategy will start in September 2020. This will be for the promotion of the Garden Club and the main objective is to encourage residents to subscribe to the service via the website, although there will be substantial messaging around encouraging those that do not want to sign-up, to compost at home.
- 14.3 In September, a Garden Club leaflet will be distributed to all households in the borough that currently receive a garden waste kerbside collection (around 70,500 properties). This will be supported with messaging on a variety of channels including the creation of a

promotional video, digital advertising on Facebook, a vinyl banner on the fencing at the Shrub End Recycling Centre, e-newsletter articles, social media posts, press releases and internal communications.

- 14.4 On a resident's penultimate free collection day in September, a large 'luggage' tag will be attached to their garden waste sack or wheelie bin. This tag will let the resident know that it almost their last free collection and contain a strong call to action to take up a Garden Club Subscription.
- 14.5 On sign up to the Garden Club, members will receive a digital 'Welcome to the Garden Club' leaflet.
- 14.6 The vehicle livery on vehicles will be updated for ongoing promotion of the service.
- 14.7 For consistency of message, all artworks would have a matching look and feel and encourage online sign-up.
- 14.8 Previous changes in the waste service give a set of lessons learned about which methods of communication are most effective and these will be reflected in the communications plan.
- 14.9 Although there is likely to be initial public concern about the introduction of a paid for subscription service, experience from other Councils demonstrates that public concern dissipates soon after introduction. Concern can also be mitigated by clearly communicating the improvements overall to customer journeys. Residents who opt to subscribe to the discretionary element of the service will have access to additional benefits promoted to Garden Club members including, access to events, tutorials, retail vouchers/offers etc.
- 14.10 Colchester will be the only local authority in Essex offering additional benefits to residents as part of a 'paid for' collection.

15. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 15.1 Residents homes and their local environment are a key determinant of health. A high performing waste and recycling service contributes to and positively influences perceptions of place and the local environment.
- 15.2 Improving health and wellbeing in communities is a key priority for the Council. Garden Club will act as an enabler and encourage residents to explore nature and green open spaces. This links to existing campaigns delivered by the Council with and alongside community partners including the Woodland Project, #ParksAtHome and Grow you Own at Home.

16. Health and Safety Implications

- 16.1 A full review of Health and Safety requirements as a result of any changes to the waste service will be undertaken to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation. This will include specific training for waste staff in new equipment required specifically bin lifting equipment.
- 16.2 Research has consistently proven that the level of musculoskeletal injuries associated with using wheeled bins are lower and levels of sickness amongst staff on existing wheeled bin collection routes are on average 3 days lower per FTE.

17. Risk Management Implication

- 17.1 Take up of the Garden Club subscription service is difficult to project accurately and is a risk factor but experience from other local authorities who have implemented similar changes suggests that the scheme will be popular. As such there is a confidence in the projections (50% participation rate) set out in this paper and that these are realistic and achievable.

Risks	Mitigation
Reputational Damage from residents and ward councillor complaints	Garden waste charging is normal for 65% of councils and not charging would mean £1m more would need to be found from other services, if possible, with potentially more difficult consequences. Member briefings will help everyone understand and communicate the reasons for the decision.
Environment Bill is enacted and requires garden waste collections	The Bill passed its second reading in early March has been delayed but may not prohibit charging. If so, and if enacted, this new burden would need to be funded. Unlikely to take effect within MTFF period.
Residents do not receive information about the changes.	Dedicated communications campaign with commercially savvy marketing
Low income households are disadvantaged	Scheme is optional of course but a concession on the sign-up fee will be made possible. In addition, a form of staged payment will be made available for those unable to make a one-off annual payment.
Increased vehicle movements and fuel consumption	With approximately 50% of households estimated to join the Garden Club, overall vehicle mileage is likely to be similar. Light EV Fleet procurement underway and heavy fleet Replacement (mid 2020s) will be zero tailpipe emissions.
Staff do not get behind the change	An important driver for these proposals is employee wellbeing and our staff engagement suggests this will be popular.
Reintroduction of stringent social distancing measures	It will be essential that the Garden Club service is delivered as best it can, as it will be a paid service. As it is estimated that the number of customers who sign up to the service will be phased, the risk of not delivering the service will be low, as capacity will be available within the current levels. Officers will continue to implement learning from the previous pandemic response, control measures to protect staff maintained as per waste industry guidance.
Supply requirements affected by future spike in infection rates and any subsequent lockdown measures at key points in	Officers will implement learning from the previous pandemic response, control measures to protect staff maintained as per waste industry guidance.

the timeline (October 2020 and Spring 2021).	<p>Early, clear and robust communications to the public about the effect on the delivery at key points will be undertaken</p> <p>There will be robust project management through the Waste & Recycling Project Board and subsidiary specialist and operational working groups.</p>
Income is not sufficient to cover service costs	<p>Expenditure has been modelled on an uptake of 35k households generating £1.75m gross income.</p> <p>Quarterly and monthly data of uptake and income will be closely and carefully monitored.</p> <p>Budget management will separate the service from the rest of the Service budget, in order that the expenditure and income can be monitored carefully.</p>
<p>Reduction in recycling rate</p> <p>Increased amount of garden waste disposed of at Household Waste & Recycling Centres</p> <p>Increased amount of garden waste fly-tipped across the Borough</p> <p>Increased amount of residual waste and associated disposal costs</p>	<p>Recycling rates will be monitored closely and alternative methods to improve CBCs recycling may need to be implemented</p> <p>Service enhancements will be supported by comprehensive communications campaign to engage with residents and the local media, communicating the service and charges to encourage residents to register.</p>
Customer Services/Web not able to accommodate the demand for application and payments.	Customer Services and Digital Services teams have been involved from early planning, processes requirements have been specified and agreed.

18. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 18.1 The Council's environment and sustainability ambitions set out clear steps to reduce carbon emissions and reduce waste in the Borough (e.g. through reduced fleet emissions associated with discretionary waste collection and by increasing composting at source).
- 18.2 It is anticipated that these service changes and the enhanced promotion of home composting through Garden Club tutorials and events will see the amount of green waste collected reduce. This is line with evidence from several Boroughs where chargeable garden waste schemes have already been introduced. This generally shows that whilst some garden waste tonnage might be 'lost', significant negative impact on the recycling rate is unlikely.
- 18.3 The existing free garden waste collection draws in material that could be composted at home, meaning that the total amount of waste collected is inflated. Whilst free garden

waste services are an 'easy' way to increase recycling rates, there is no environmental benefit, as the extra material needs to be moved and processed, creating additional environmental impacts. In line with the waste hierarchy it is better to avoid the need for this waste to be collected and treated in the first place.

Appendix A

LA	2020/21	
	Garden Waste Charge	Method of collection
Basildon	£0	Weekly - 240L standard or 180L available With food waste
Babergh/Mid Suffolk	£5 set up cost £52.50 per year	Wheeled bins only
Braintree	£0	240L fortnightly wheeled bin
Brentwood	£52.50 per year for hire of garden bin £3.26 for a roll of 10 garden sacks	1.240 litre bins & biodegradable sacks (rolls of ten)
Castle Point	£6.20 for 20 sacks or £33 for a 240 l bin	Weekly collection with no winter break - bin or sacks
Chelmsford	£0	Fortnightly collection - 240L standard
Harlow	£42.00 p/a + £30 set up fee for new customers only. Ad-hoc now only accepting compostable sacks purchased @ £19.00 for roll of 20.	Fortnightly bin or sacks
Ipswich	£0	Fortnightly
Maldon	£25 set up cost £46.00 online or direct debit.	March – November, fortnightly Dec – Feb suspend for 2 weeks following Christmas 240 L Wheeled Bin only not all properties eligible
Southend	£0	240L or sacks
Tendring	£75 for the first year (includes £25 set up fee) £50 per year thereafter	Fortnightly with 2-week Christmas break Wheeled bin only
Thurrock	£0; but charge for wheelie bin replacements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £36 for a new wheeled bin • £18.50 for a new wheeled bin if you are aged 60 or over • £18.50 for a new wheeled bin if you receive certain 	Weekly

	benefits – proof of entitlement will be needed	
Uttlesford	£46 for online and cash/cheque payments, £40 for Direct Debits and a 25% reduction if in receipt of LCTS. New customers also required to pay £22.50 for a garden waste bin	Bin (bi-weekly with a break of 4/5 weeks over the Christmas period)) Wheeled bins only
West Suffolk	£42 per year	26 collections year Wheeled bins only

7 July 2020

Report of	Assistant Director – Corporate and Improvement Services	Author	Owen Howell ☎ 282518
Title	Work Programme 2020-21		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the current Work Programme 2020-2021 for the Scrutiny Panel. This provides details of the reports that are scheduled for each meeting during the municipal year.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and approve the contents of the Work Programme for 2020-2021.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Panel's work programme evolves as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting the opportunity is taken for the work programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances. The current work programme for 2020-21 is appended to this report.
- 3.2 The Forward Plan of Key Decisions is included as part of the work programme for the Scrutiny Panel, and this is included an **Appendix A**.
- 3.3 It is envisaged that meetings of the Scrutiny Panel will be conducted remotely online until further notice is given. Councillors, officers and members will be informed of any developments regarding meeting arrangements/future venues, and these will be publicised for members of the public who may wish to participate or attend.
- 3.4 It should be noted that the Work Programme has been redrawn to reflect the use of online meetings and the need to focus greater scrutiny work on consideration of a smaller number of agenda items per meeting.

4. Standard References

- 4.1 There are no particular references to publicity or consultation considerations; or financial; equality, diversity and human rights; community safety; health and safety, environmental and sustainability or risk management implications.

5. Strategic Plan References

- 5.1 Good governance is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing. Unfortunately
- 5.2 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the Public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self-governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

Appendices

Appendix A – Forward Plan of Key Decisions – 1 May 2020 to 31 July 2020.

Work Programme for 2020/21

Scrutiny Panel meeting - 1 June 2020
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 23 May 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finance and Council Response Reports relating to Covid-19 2. Work Programme 2020-21
Scrutiny Panel meeting – 7 June 2020
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing - TBC
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pre-Scrutiny of Proposed changes to Garden Waste Collection 2. Work Programme 2020-21
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 21 July 2020
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 16 July 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year End 2019/20 Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action Plan 2018-21 2. N.E. Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance 3. Annual Scrutiny Report 4. Work Programme 2020-21
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 18 August 2020
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 13 August 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recovery work by CBC, CBH and CCHL relating to the Covid-19 situation 2. Colchester Business Improvement District 3. Reports from Arts Organisations (Mercury, The Arts Centre, FirstSite) 4. Work Programme 2020-21
Scrutiny Panel (Crime and Disorder Committee) - 15 September 2020
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 10 September 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee) 2. Work Programme 2020-21
Scrutiny Panel – 13 October 2020
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Briefing – 8 October 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local Council Tax Support – Year 2021/22 (Provisional) 2. Budget Strategy for 2021-22 3. Work Programme 2020-21
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 10 November 2020
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 5 November 2020
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work Programme 2020-21
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 15 December 2020

Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 10 December 2020
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 26 January 2021
1. Half Year 2020-21 Performance Report & Strategic Plan Action Plan progress
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 21 January 2021
2. Budget Strategy for 2021-22
3. Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd ITBC1
4. 2021-22 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, Medium Term Financial Forecast and Treasury Management Investment Strategy
2. Housing Revenue Accounts Estimate and Housing Investment Programme
3. Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2021-22
4. Colchester Borough Homes: Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2021-22
5. Work Programme 2020-21
Scrutiny Panel (Crime and Disorder Committee) - 16 February 2021
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 11 February 2021
1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)
2. Work Programme 2020-21
Scrutiny Panel meeting– 16 March 2021
Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 11 March 2021
1. Work Programme 2020-21

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS 1 July 2020 – 31 October 2020

During the period from 1 July 2020 – 31 October 2020* Colchester Borough Council intends to take 'Key Decisions' on the issues set out in the following pages. Key Decisions relate to those executive decisions which are likely to either:

- result in the Council spending or saving money in excess of £500,000; or
- have a significant impact on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards within the Borough of Colchester.

This Forward Plan should be seen as an outline of the proposed decisions and it will be updated on a monthly basis. Any questions on specific issues included on the Plan should be addressed to the contact name specified in the Plan. General queries about the Plan itself should be made to Democratic Services (01206) 507832 or email democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk

The Council invites members of the public to attend any of the meetings at which these decisions will be discussed and the documents listed on the Plan and any other documents relevant to each decision which may be submitted to the decision taker can be viewed free of charge although there will be a postage and photocopying charge for any copies made. *All decisions will be available for inspection on the Council's website, www.colchester.gov.uk*

If you wish to request details of documents regarding the 'Key Decisions' outlined in this Plan please contact the individual officer identified.

If you wish to make comments or representations regarding the 'Key Decisions' outlined in this Plan please submit them, in writing, to the Contact Officer highlighted two working days before the date of the decision (as indicated in the brackets in the date of decision column). This will enable your views to be considered by the decision taker.

Contact details for the Council's various service departments are incorporated at the end of this plan.

If you need help with reading or understanding this document please telephone (01206) 282222 or textphone users dial 18001 followed by the full number that you wish to call and we will try to provide a reading service, translation or other formats you may need.

*The Forward Plan also shows decisions which fall before the period covered by the Plan but which have not been taken at the time of the publication of the Plan.

KEY DECISION REQUIRED	DOES DECISION INCLUDE EXEMPT INFORMATION (or information defined by the Government as Confidential)	DATE OF DECISION or PERIOD DECISION TO BE TAKEN	DECISION MAKER (title and name, including Cabinet, portfolio holders and officers)	DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED OR TO BE SUBMITTED TO DECISION TAKER TO CONSIDER (and from where they are available)	CONTACT DETAILS FROM WHICH DOCUMENTS CAN BE OBTAINED (name of the authors of the reports)
Award of Contract for Festive Lights	Yes	June 2020	<p>Councillor Martin Goss, Portfolio Holder for waste, Environment and Transportation.</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Portfolio Holder report	<p>Lee Copping Operations Manager 07967 692081 Lee.copping@colchester.gov.uk</p>
Award of Contract for Food Waste Vehicles	Yes	June 2020	<p>Dan Gascoyne, Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with Councillor Martin Goss, Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation</p> <p>Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk</p>	Officer report	<p>Tracy Allen Specialist and Contracts Manager (01206) 282256 Tracy.allen@colchester.gov.uk</p>

KEY DECISION REQUIRED	DOES DECISION INCLUDE EXEMPT INFORMATION (or information defined by the Government as Confidential)	DATE OF DECISION or PERIOD DECISION TO BE TAKEN	DECISION MAKER (title and name, including Cabinet, portfolio holders and officers)	DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED OR TO BE SUBMITTED TO DECISION TAKER TO CONSIDER (and from where they are available)	CONTACT DETAILS FROM WHICH DOCUMENTS CAN BE OBTAINED (name of the authors of the reports)
Waste and Recycling New Strategic Priority – to review our waste and recycling strategy and the operating systems utilised for collecting waste and recycling	No	8 July 2020	Cabinet (Cllrs Cory, J Young, Fox, Goss, Higgins, King, Lilley and Luxford Vaughan) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Report	Rosa Tanfield Group Manager – Neighbourhood Services Tel: 03300538047 Rosa.tanfield@colchester.gov.uk
Increasing the Council's Affordable Housing Programme	Yes	8 July 2020	Cabinet (Cllrs Cory, J Young, Fox, Goss, Higgins, King, Lilley and Luxford Vaughan) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet report	Andrew Tyrrell Client Services Manager 01206 282390 Andrew.tyrrell@colchester.gov.uk

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The award of contract for the Council's new affordable homes to be constructed at Hardings Close, and the delegation of authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing to award 2 other contracts at Buffett/Scarfe Way and	Yes	8 July 2020	Cabinet (Cllrs Cory, J Young, Fox, Goss, Higgins, King, Lilley and Luxford Vaughan) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet report	Andrew Tyrrell Client Services Manager 01206 282390 Andrew.tyrrell@colchester.gov.uk
Update on Proposed New Grow-on Business Centre in Queen Street	Yes	8 July 2020	Cabinet (Cllrs Cory, J Young, Fox, Goss, Higgins, King, Lilley and Luxford Vaughan) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet report	Matthew Brown Economic Development Manager 01206 507348 matthew.brown@colchester.gov.uk

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Appointment of Contract for EICRs (Electrical Installation Condition Reports) and Remedial Reports in the Housing Stock	Yes	July 2020	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Adam Fox Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Clare Lawrance Client Asset Manager 01206 282506 Clare.lawrance@colchester.gov.uk
Award of contract for leased ICT equipment under Delegated Authority	No	July 2020	Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, Councillor David King Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Kieran Johnston Strategic ICT Manager 01206 507880 Kieran.johnston@colchester.gov.uk

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Approval to award a contract over the value of £500,000 for the delivery and procurement of parking bay sensors for installation in various locations in both Colchester and Clacton-on-Sea.	Yes	July 2020	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Wellbeing and Public Safety, Councillor Michel Lilley (under delegated powers from Cabinet) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services	Portfolio Holder report will detailing the proposed contract to be awarded, including the supplier and works to be carried out by Ringway Jacobs/Essex Highways.	Jason Butcher Parking Project Manager 01206 282901 Jason.butcher@colchester.gov.uk
The award of a contract for the Council's new affordable homes to be constructed at Buffett Way and Scarfe Way, Greenstead	Yes	July 2020	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Adam Fox Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Andrew Tyrrell Client Services Manager 01206 282390 Andrew.tyrrell@colchester.gov.uk

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The award of a contract for the Council's new affordable homes to be constructed at Military Road	Yes	August 2020	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Adam Fox Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder report	Andrew Tyrrell Client Services Manager 01206 282390 Andrew.tyrrell@colchester.gov.uk
Award of Contract for the Colchester Northern Gateway Heat Network	Yes	2 September 2020	Cabinet (Cllrs Cory, J Young, Fox, Goss, Higgins, King, Lilley and Luxford Vaughan) Please contact via Democratic Services (01206) 507832 email: democratic.services@colchester.gov.uk	Cabinet report and tender analysis	Andrew Tyrrell Client Services Manager 01206 282390 Andrew.tyrrell@colchester.gov.uk

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