



COLCHESTER ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON: Thursday 9 March 2023 by Zoom

PRESENT: John Gili-Ross (Chairman), Robert Johnstone (Vice Chairman), Petra Palfreyman (CALC Clerk), Simon Dougherty Abberton & Langenhoe, Maggie Holmes Layer de la Haye, Mick Mead Gt Horkesley, John Akker, West Mersea, Julie Baker, West Mersea, Brian Butcher West Bergholt, Dan Jordan Stanway, Angela McLaughlin Boxted, John Jardine Eight Ash Green, Emma Coney Wakes Colne, Sue Allen- Shepherd Tiptree, David King Colchester City Council Leader, Pam Donnelly Colchester City Council CEO

- 1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES** Carol Harbach Langham, East Donyland Parish Council, Fingringhoe Parish Council and Sarah Cullis West Bergholt
- 2. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 1 DECEMBER 2022** All agreed
- 3. MEETING TOPICS & GUEST SPEAKER** Cllr David King, Leader of Colchester City Council & Pam Donnelly, Chief Executive of Colchester City Council - the future of Colchester City, followed by questions and answers

Pam advised that she has been the CEO for the last year. They have been working hard on the budget and are ready for the challenges ahead to reshape, reset and transform the Council. There is work to do around recovery, economy, the workforce, and finance as the Council cannot continue to operate as before. The Council need to save £5M this year and £5M next year so savings and cuts will be made collaboratively and sensitively. The senior leadership team has already been cut from nine to six and this reflects the changes that will be made across the board.

As a city authority there are no voting rights or statutory say and are still being consulted. They are close to having an expression of interest to go to the government for a Level 2 or Level 3 deal. Level x has a Mayor, the other one doesn't.

For Level 3 they will get £30M for 30 years. The real benefit in setting out is the greater opportunities for Essex which gives the city a lot of influence, although no say. It has been excellent how the counties and cities have reached out. From Epping to Tendring their responsibility is for over 1 million people. The Royal visit last week was successful, with the plans and publicity very much driven by the Palace. The hard work starts now.

David advised he has been in central government for over 40 years, with 5 years in local government and 5 years as a community councillor. Development = extra money, authority and influence.

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For the budget, we have had to draw on reserves and there is a forward gap. The team have done a fantastic job to make a bid for it and work for it. Colchester City Council are good at these which builds confidence and respect in government. The Council have done well with £19M Town Deal, which is starting to flow through. Improvements to the town are good for tourists and there are plans to develop the Balkerne Gate area, St Nicholas Square and The Jumbo, helping with resources and supplementing their team.

Levelling up – St Botolphs area and looking at how the city works, places to live, access to heritage thorough the town and up to the Castle to make the city a better place to live and visit, improve prospects and improve lives. In achieving city status the politicians and senior staff recognise the size and scale and possibilities. Working with business partners to market the city as a place to live and visit and change the views externally, making sure we are seen as well as heard. The city is not just about the centre as we have historical and cultural places to visit and enjoy and areas such as Tollgate, the Northern Gateway and university are attractive to visitors where there is good leisure, entertainment, and facilities. Also, areas such as the smaller towns, villages, coastal area and countryside. These are needed to get mutual support and understanding. There will be a year of celebration to mark the city status with a new logo to capture the change.

Q – Devolution around Essex document. There is no mention of the towns and parishes in the first draft.

A – Oversea investment is between countries and cities

Q – Talking about the city 3 + 1 but surely 3 + 2

A – 3 + 1 + 1 which includes towns and villages and more rural wards. We want to ensure they are inclusive conversations.

Q – How can we help you help us. The invitation is always open from Towns & Parishes, and we want to be involved and have the conversations which help us understand the difficult issues.

A – We should meet once per quarter, and with other members of the team. We have forward quarterly meetings so we should be able to fit something in after those meetings to pass on the information,

Q – Both devolution and the future of Colchester is bound up and will be interested to see how the direction of Colchester and the skills agenda could change. Also, the opportunity for the university and further education at the Institute, getting the youth involved and the need for affordable housing. Tourism – world beating coastline on the doorstep on London. You need to get the message out to all the Towns and Parishes with a 10 minute video presentation with about what the City Council can do.

A - We have connections with Freeport East and are talking to Alison Andreas and her team. The governments key ask is to devolve skills etc and there is a big debate about this. We are doing our best to promote tourism but do not have any tourism staff anymore. Our natural assets are very special with areas of outstanding natural beauty. We need a partnership with all interested parties to improve employment and economic growth.

Housing needs are unending. We have 6000 in the Borough which are managed as well as

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possible. There are forward plans to buy from the market and garage plans. The Tendring borders plan is contentious. The aim is to secure 30% affordable housing but it's not always possible. No one wants a new development near where they live.

The scale of the challenge is that there is 3000 on the housing needs register and some people will never get a home. There are 250 in temporary accommodation, and we welcomed refugee families from all over the world. A small scheme for Alms Houses is being considered to see if they can meet a modern-day need.

Q – Can you influence the government on local needs? Houses being built in rural communities do not meet the needs.

A – We are looking at potential modular homes in Chelmsford and Romford.

Q – Rural Transport Infrastructure – Tiptree is expanding vastly with so many more cars but developers do not provide enough car spaces as they suggest using buses, but the buses are not adequate and the services have been cut so no one stops using their cars.

A – CCC have spent some time with the strategy Bus Back Better and subsidise to ensure services run. The pandemic has reduced usage. There may be some trialling of small buses that can be booked. A devolution key theme is transport. Kevin Bentley wants control over transport to improve health and other reasons.

Q – The model we have for local transport is at fault. The local community does not fund local transport. Have met with User Groups and Essex Highways officers. Bus companies can't speak to each other as they are against the competition act. We need collaboration and local control.

Public footpaths – over last 20 years PROW network is cut back more each year. Policies from NPPF state they should enhance public health. Will this problem change with devolution.

A – Good developers respect and see the advantages of PROW. Planners should be as helpful as possible. The tide of change around nature and natural connections is a good thing. Neighbourhood plans are key, and attitudes are better than they were.

Q – Observations about the City Status – the Norther Gateway is a great example but Tollgate is seen as a chaotic and not well planned which could turn negative. Most foreign investors will look at cities if you are within 50 miles of London as it puts them on the A list so it's essential to market this. Modular homes are worth looking at.

A number of alms houses in Colchester are run by LEAP.

Q – There are no S106 documents or policies about how S106 agreements are entered in to. There is no joined up thinking, no forms and no set procedures.

A – An external audit of S106 procedure has been requested and for the whole system to be devised so the new process will be clear. Details of the audit will be provided once the audit is complete.

Q – There appears to be a dog bin surcharge on Parishes but not if you live on the city centre.

A – This will be looked into and reported back but is probably because of rising prices.

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Other comments – staff at CCC at a public meeting dealing with a contentious development about a garage site, took a lot of abuse but they got a lot of respect for how they managed the situation.

Thanks were given by JGR and CALC will look forward to how we can work together in the future.

4.TO RECEIVE REPORTS

- a. **TREASURES REPORT** - The clerks' fees of £218.00 for the previous quarter to March 2023, were agreed. The last bank statement held to 20 October 2022, showed a balance of £1205.50. A credit of £138.00 against hall hire costs at Marks Tey Village Hall is also held. A bank statement has not been received since the last meeting. The clerk will forward details with the minutes. Proposed JGR 2nd – JA
- b. **LOCAL HIGHWAY** - there are some changes coming to the LHP. The next meeting is in April.
- c. **GOVERNANCE BOARD** – not met.
- d. **EALC EXECUTIVE** – Brian Butcher attended the exec meeting and advised that they are considering how the EALC can revamp their conference facilities and make the meeting room more professional so that meeting can also be remote The IT is also an old system and that some people are prohibited from attending the EALC due to the location and distance of the office.

5.INFORMATION SHARING

John Gili- Ross will be standing down as chairman of CALC but would like to stay on the EALC executive if agreed. The next meeting in June is the annual meeting and members can put themselves forward for the position, at that meeting.

The EALC AGM is 21 September 2023 at Colchester Football Stadium.

Digi Go electric on demand buses are on trial in Braintree district and in the medium term they might be interested into Colchester.

Could we ask RCCE Rural Exception sites officer Laura Atkinson and also a representative from an Alms-house Association to speak another time.

West Bergholt have been approached by Myland to support the footbridge over the A12. Thanks for information about adult gyms and table tennis areas.

No update from the Rural Prosperity Fund yet

6.DATES OF NEXT MEETING:

Date: Thursday 22 June 2023

Location: Marks Tey Village Hall

Time 7.00pm

Speakers: Councillor Lee Scott, Cabinet member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport.

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There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9pm and thanked everyone for attending and providing valuable feedback.

Signed..... Date.....

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