



Working for Colchester Borough Council

Information Pack



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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Firstly, thank you for your interest in Colchester Borough Council (CBC) as a local employer and service provider. We are a local government authority providing a diverse range of public services across the borough of Colchester, the second largest district in Essex. Currently Colchester has a population of 176,008 people¹, which accounts for 12.5% of the total population of Essex. It is also estimated that Colchester will grow to approximately 223,500 people by 2021, which is an increase of 30.9% since 2006 and a significant factor in the way that CBC will need to provide its services in the future.

The Council delivers more than 50 different types of services to a wide range of customers on a daily basis, and it is probably true to say that no other organisation in Colchester is as diverse as the Council in terms of the numerous professions people can work in. We employ around 800 people, which makes CBC one of the largest employers to work for in the local area as well as an attractive option for people of all ages looking for a diverse range of career opportunities.

We operate six main departments known as Services and at the heart of our business is the Customer Service Centre, which is often the first point of contact for customers. Overseeing the work of the different Services is an Executive Management Team headed by our Chief Executive, Adrian Pritchard. A full organisation structure for the Council can be found in this pack.

“Colchester is an ambitious Council with an understanding and aspiration to deliver high quality and accessible services for its residents”. That is the view of an independent assessment team, and we are proud that our commitment to delivering quality services to local people was acknowledged so clearly. The borough is also an outstanding place to live and work in and has a very exciting future ahead of it as Colchester continues to grow. We want to keep moving forwards, and to make the borough and the Council which it serves even better.

Our vision statement in our Strategic Plan is "Rich heritage, ambitious future" and our key priorities for Colchester borough are shown below:

These are the four words that we feel sum up what we want to achieve:



Vibrant

promoting our heritage and working hard to shape our future.



Thriving

attracting business and selling Colchester as a destination.



Prosperous

generating opportunities for growth and supporting infrastructure.



Welcoming

a place where people can grow and be proud to live.

¹ All figures are from the Mid-2012 Population Estimates report produced by CBC's Research and Engagement Team.

What is Local Government?

Local Government exists to provide or enable services to be provided to the local community. By electing Councillors to represent them local people can make sure that the most important issues, such as basic frontline services affecting everyone on a day to day basis, are provided.

The Structure of Local Government

The way local government exists today has evolved over a number of years. The last biggest restructure was in 1974 when fewer but larger councils were created. In England and Wales (excluding London) councils were reduced from 1,400 to 422.

In general the structure adopted in England and Wales (excluding London) consists of three tiers of authority and responsibility:

- The County Council (eg Essex)
- The District Council (eg Colchester) – some are called 'Borough' for historical reasons
- The Parish Council (eg Wivenhoe)

Some urban areas with large populations had special needs and needed a separate administrative structure (Metropolitan County Councils and the GLC). However, the Local Government Act 1985 abolished these councils and the functions were transferred to District and Borough Councils.

In 1993 central government decided to restructure local government again. They wanted to bring us in line with Europe and have a single tier system throughout England, Scotland and Wales. These would be called unitary authorities, a council that would provide all the district and county functions.

After the review not all councils became unitary. Scotland and Wales are now entirely unitary – single tier. In Essex, only Southend and Thurrock are unitary authorities, ie they provide all local services.

The majority of councils in England remain three tier, ie County, District and Parish.

County Councils (eg Essex)

County Councils are responsible for providing services which have wider social implications, such as Social Services, Libraries and Education.

Some functions are shared with District Councils, eg planning and roads. Districts can also take on functions on an agency basis, eg highway maintenance, but ultimately the County is accountable.

Counties also have statutory responsibilities to:

- Levy the Council Tax
- Borrow money to finance capital projects
- Support or oppose parliamentary bills on behalf of the electorate

District Councils (eg Colchester)

District Councils have sole responsibility for their functions, eg housing. Districts are not subordinate to the County Council nor does the County Council have a general right to supervise the activities of the Districts.

Parish Councils (eg Wivenhoe)

Parish Councils consult with District Councils to represent the views of their community on major policy issues. They are responsible for the narrow range of services including allotments, bus shelters and play areas.

A list of some services for each tier (see the next section) shows that County services are carried out on a large scale and Parish on a very small, local scale.

Politics and Local Government

Local authorities are controlled by ordinary men and women who have been elected democratically to represent the local people. At Colchester Borough Council these representatives are known as Elected Members or Councillors. To become a Councillor a candidate must be:

- A British, Commonwealth or European Union citizen.
- Aged 18 or over.
- Living, working or owning property in the area during the last year.

Candidates accept and agree with the policies of the political party they represent (eg Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrat etc). However, candidates can be 'independent' and not associated with a particular party. Most members of the public will vote according to who represents a particular party. However, occasionally a person might be elected on their personal reputation.

Elections

The Borough Council elections occur in three out of every four years on the first Thursday in May. The County Council elections occur on the fourth year. General elections can be called at any time but must take place within five years of the last one. The candidate who gets the most votes will represent their electoral area or "ward". The political party with the largest number of elected candidate's forms the majority party.

How decisions are made

The Council is the ultimate decision-making authority. However, to speed up the process it has given decision-making power to other internal bodies – the Cabinet, individual Cabinet Members (Portfolio Holders), Planning Committee, Licensing Committee and employed officers of the Council.

All Councillors meet at least four times a year. The Council makes major policy decisions, sets the budget and council tax levels, makes changes to The Constitution, appoints members to the Cabinet, committees and panels and considers any issue referred to it.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet is the Council's executive body and is the heart of the day to day decision-making process. The Cabinet meets every six to eight weeks to lead the implementation of Council policy within the Council's budget and policy framework and makes recommendations to the Council on the budget and any changes to policy issues. Its decisions can be "called in" by other Councillors for further consideration by the Scrutiny Panel.

The Cabinet is made up of eight Councillors who are each responsible for specific areas known as portfolios. The Cabinet Members are responsible for the day to day decision-making within their own portfolio.

Portfolio Holders

Day to day executive decisions are delegated to individual Cabinet members who each have responsibility for certain matters called portfolios. They make decisions, which are consistent with the policy of the Council and the approved budget. Their decisions can be reviewed under the Call-In Procedure.

The Portfolio Holders for 2015/16 are:

Cllr Paul Smith	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy
Cllr Annie Feltham	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Communities and Leisure
Cllr Tim Young	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Licensing, Community Safety and Culture
Cllr Beverley Oxford	Portfolio Holder for Customers
Cllr Bill Frame	Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Planning
Cllr Tina Bourne	Portfolio Holder for Housing and Public Protection
Cllr Mark Cory	Portfolio Holder for Resources
Cllr Dominic Graham	Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services.

Employed Officers of the Council

In order to ensure that business is conducted efficiently and that services are provided to the specified standards, the Council, the Cabinet, the Planning Committee and the Licensing Committee have delegated some of their powers to employed officers. These decisions must be consistent with the policy of the Council and the approved budget.

The Three Tiers of Local Government

County Council	District Councils	Parish Councils
Planning - Structure plans - Development control (strategic and reserved decisions) - Acquisition and disposal of land National parks and countryside Highways Transport co-ordination Traffic Caravan sites Housing (limited reserve powers) Fire Consumer Protection eg weights and measures, food and drugs Refuse disposal Playing fields Museums and art galleries Parks and open spaces Education Social Services Libraries	Planning - local plans - most development control - acquisition and disposal of land Building regulations Housing Environmental Health eg clean air; pollution; pest control; food safety and hygiene; nuisances; slaughter houses; port health; Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act Maintenance of unclassified roads in urban areas Refuse collection Public transport undertakings Playing fields and swimming baths Car parks Museums and art galleries Cemeteries and crematoria Markets and fairs Parks and open spaces Tourism	Allotments Cemeteries - cemeteries - war memorials - maintenance of closed churchyards - provision of mortuaries Environment - litter control - provision, maintenance and protection of roadside verges - byelaws Open spaces - footpaths - village greens - commons - parks and open spaces - public walks - clearing and drainage of ponds Public amenities - footway lighting - public seats - off-street car parks - cycle and motor parks - public shelters - public clocks - public conveniences - washhouses and launderettes Social and recreation facilities - parish or community hall - playing fields - swimming baths - pleasure boats Other - entertainments - arts and crafts - encouragement of tourism - power to make grants and loans

Corporate Social Responsibility

In February 2007 we signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. The declaration is a tool to secure commitment from UK Councils to tackling the causes and effects of Climate Change. Under this commitment we have developed a policy and action plan to mitigate (reduce our impact) and adapt to the possible effects of Climate Change. The aim of the action plan is to set out recommendations on how the Council can take an innovative approach that addresses local and global impacts.

As part of the Nottingham Declaration CBC addresses the issues of Climate Change through 4 different areas:

Getting our own house in order – Reducing the amount of Carbon Dioxide created through our own buildings, services and operations. We have taken part in a Local Authority Carbon Management programme to help us do this and have prevented over 2,444 tonnes of CO₂ from being emitted into the atmosphere (as at 31 December 2012). All of our staff are involved and are being asked to do their bit by switching things off, recycling and even using public transport rather than using their cars. We also have many buildings projects which will make substantial financial savings along with a reduction in CO₂.

Becoming a community leader – Now we have shown that we can do it, we want to help the wider community to do the same. We are working with businesses, residents and community groups to help them to become more energy efficient which will not only protect our environment but also save lots of money that would be wasted on the ever increasing energy bills.

Providing sustainable services – We want to make our services more sustainable and reduce our impact on the environment. In order to do this we are looking at the policies and strategies throughout the Council to see if we can make them more sustainable. We also ask managers and councillors to raise issues of Climate Change on agendas across Council business.

Using our powers – We want to utilise some of the powers that we have as a Council to help people to become more sustainable. This includes things like planning where we will make sure that new developments meet a certain criteria and also the things that we as a Council buy. By using our purchasing power we may also make other businesses think more about their own environmental impact.

Our People

We want to continue to be a high performing Council with motivated employees who are proud to work here and make a difference to people's lives. We need to use our resources wisely to be a great employer where we draw on and develop the talent and skills we have in the organisation to be even better than we are in everything that we do.

We have three core goals for the organisation, with underpinning attitudes and behaviours which we expect our staff to have. These are Customer, Business and Culture – find out more on our website [here](#).

We are committed to the personal and professional development of our people and this was recognised in our latest Investors in People re-assessment:

“The commitment towards learning and development is well evidenced and people who work for the Council understand that this is a priority for the organisation. There are countless ways that this continues to be demonstrated ranging from the top level people strategies through to incidental examples of people giving and receiving help on a day to day basis. Strong linkage is made between strategy and people planning and this is done at an early stage rather than as an afterthought. When planning initiatives and concepts, people are at the heart of considerations.”

The Council also takes an active approach towards promoting the wellbeing of our people so that they are “happy, healthy and here”. A comprehensive wellbeing programme continues to develop in its scope and impact on the morale of employees and assists with a wide range of lifestyle aspects.

Benefits of Working for CBC

Local government in general is a diverse employer that encourages the development of people who in turn deliver quality services to the public. Employees feel that they are contributing to the local community and making a difference in people's lives whilst working in a dynamic, fair and flexible environment. Whoever you are and whatever your background, working in local government gives you the opportunity not only to develop your career but also to improve the lives of others.

CBC offers employees a range of voluntary and flexible benefits to complement a person's lifestyle needs and these include:

- Pension scheme
- Generous annual leave plus the ability to purchase additional leave
- Subsidised gym and leisure membership plus other wellbeing incentives/checks
- Flexitime and flexible working practices plus advice on home energy efficiency
- Salary sacrifice childcare voucher scheme
- "Bike2Work" scheme – large discounts on bikes and accessories
- Public transport discounts
- Car parking facilities and car share scheme
- 1:1 sessions with "personal journey planners"
- A range of local and national discounts on products and services
- Continuous Professional and Personal Development

Flexible Travel

We also undertake activities to encourage our staff to think about how they travel to and for work and whether they could adopt more sustainable forms of transport. To support this alternative way of thinking, as well as promoting the benefits of increased activity during the daily routine, we have introduced a great range of financial incentives, including:

- 50% off local bus travel
- 35% off train travel
- Walking for free!
- £2 a day to park on the outskirts of the town centre
- 10p a mile for car sharing

Equality and Diversity

As a public body, the Council believes that it has a moral as well as a legal duty to ensure that discrimination based on a person's age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or marital/civil partnership status does not occur within its policies or practices, and we monitor this issue across our Services

Flexible Working

Flexible Working has been a central feature of the Council's change programme, "Way We Work". Whilst our employees have for a long time uniquely benefited from a varied number and type of working patterns in contrast to the old 9-5 routine, the Council wanted to embrace working "differently" in a more modern sense.

To achieve this we have introduced technology that enables a majority of our office-based staff to work from home or at the premises of organisations we work in close partnership with and this includes the ability to make phone calls over the Internet rather than using traditional desk handsets. Furthermore, many of our officers who have face to face contact with customers, such as colleagues in Planning or Environmental Health, carry PDAs to assist them in their daily tasks when they are out and about in the borough.

With the advent of greater flexible working at CBC there is no longer a need for our employees to be based in our main office location, Rowan House, every day they work, so we have consequently reduced the number of desks and office space we use, which has saved the Council (and the tax payer) a significant amount of money. This means that we now adopt a policy of "hot desking" (people sharing the same desk with other colleagues) throughout most of our offices, which has also led to greater inter-departmental working.

Flexible working and more specifically the system of "flexitime" has major advantages for an employee's work/life balance. This way of working enables our people to strike a healthy balance between delivering excellent services to our customers at times of greatest need as well as accommodate the demands of their own lifestyle. For most employees working full time they are required to work 37 hours per week. The flexitime system enables employees to "bank" any additional time that they work beyond the 37 hours and each month up to 15 hours of flexitime can be converted into time off in lieu of additional hours worked. This is a very convenient way of supplementing the already generous annual leave entitlement that our employees receive.

Different ways of working flexibly at CBC could include:

- Flexitime
- Home working
- Part-time working
- Job sharing
- Compressed hours (eg working a 37 hour week over 4 days instead of 5)
- Term-time working
- Annualised hours (eg working a contracted number of hours over the year)
- Pre-Retirement flexible working
- Extended holidays/sabbaticals

A wide variety of careers

As you will see from our organisation structure, there are a wide variety of careers available at the Council with many different levels of entry and this is one of the reasons why we are a great equal opportunities employer – there's something for everyone!

As part of our appraisal process, every employee has a Personal Development Plan and this is updated at both a person's annual appraisal and mid-year review. Furthermore, for some specific jobs the Council may contribute towards the cost of an employee attaining certain qualifications that they need to perform their role to a professional standard. Our commitment to personal and professional growth has recently been recognised by our nomination as finalists in the Colchester & District Business Awards for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Careers at the Council requiring a degree or equivalent/higher professional level qualification include but are not limited to the following specialist areas:

- Accountancy
- Arboriculture
- Archaeology
- Arts/Cultural Services, eg Museums
- Building Control
- Communications
- Community Health
- Customer Service
- Environmental Health
- Estates Management
- Horticulture
- Housing
- Human Resources
- Information and Communications Technology
- Law
- Marketing and Business
- Mechanics
- Parks and Recreation Management/Maintenance
- Planning
- Regeneration
- Research
- Sport and Leisure
- Strategic Policy
- Sustainability and Recycling
- Tourism
- Urban Design

The next section contains some more detailed insights into a day in the life of some of our professional employees.

Building Control Surveyor

Service: Professional Services	Starting Salary: c£22k
<p>Purpose of the Role:</p> <p>Building control surveyors ensure that building regulations and other legislation are followed when houses, offices and other buildings are designed and constructed. These regulations cover areas such as public health, fire safety, energy conservation and building accessibility. They also check that property alterations, including extensions and conversions, meet regulations.</p>	
<p>Key Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess full Building Regulation application for compliance. • Carry out regular inspections of the building and building methods. • Inspect foundations, drainage works etc. • Maintain records of visits. • Issue completion certificates when the work has been carried out satisfactorily. 	
Qualifications	Skills/Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTEC/SQA Higher National Diploma (HND) in Building Studies Civil Engineering. • A degree in a relevant subject such as building, building control, building surveying or civil engineering. • Professional accreditation with Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) or Association of Building Engineers (ABE). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have knowledge and understanding of building regulations. • Have a good understanding of the technical aspects of construction. • Have good analytical skills. • Be able to understand technical drawings. • Have strong IT skills. • Have excellent communication skills, both written and spoken. • Be able to explain technical terms to members of the public. • Have time management skills and organisational ability. • Be able to work alone and as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

Mark, Building Control Surveyor

Started working for CBC: April 2007

I joined CBC because: I wanted to continue working in local authority Building Control

Describe CBC in one word: Challenging

My Job: A typical day would consist of arriving at the office to check any voicemail and e-mail messages for inspection or general enquiries. After this I would look through any paperwork that I had in my in-tray and collect together the files for my site inspections for that day.

At 10:00am I leave the office to visit my site inspections which can consist of a variety of inspection such as a foundation, DPC or a roof. I usually return to the office around 1:00pm and log my visits for that day on the computer. The remainder of the day is focused on checking Building Regulation full plans applications for compliance, responding to letters/e-mail/phone messages or meeting with applicants or agents to discuss their proposals or enquiries.

I enjoy working with my team and the challenges of the ever changing environment of Local Authority Building Control.

I would recommend working for Colchester Borough Council because it is an interesting environment to work in.

I am currently working towards my professional accreditation with the ABE and once I have achieved this I will continue with my development looking to further reinforce my existing skills and knowledge and add to these as the building control process is ever changing.

Customer Service Centre Team Leader

Service: Customer Service Centre	Starting Salary: c£22k
<p>Purpose of the Role:</p> <p>Provision of correct information as a first point of contact for members of the public or knowing who to forward a query onto to minimise contact with the Council. We are the face of the Council and are dedicated in providing excellent customer service.</p>	
<p>Key Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure the service runs smoothly. • Checking that all service areas are adequately staffed. • Ensuring staff are fully trained and knowledgeable for the area where they are working. • Support the team and answering escalated enquiries. • Working alongside and supporting senior managers. 	
Qualifications	Skills/Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ Level 3 in Customer Services. • Institute of Customer Services accreditation. • Line Management qualification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have knowledge and understanding of customer excellence. • Good understanding and knowledge of services offered. • Work well under pressure. • Be able to motivate and support a team. • Have excellent communication skills, both written and spoken. • Being able to explain things to members of the public in an easy to understand way. • Have time management skills and organisational ability. • Be able to work as a part of a multi-disciplinary team.

Roz, Customer Services Team Leader

Started working for CBC: March 1986

I joined CBC because: The Council was a good employer and there were good career prospects for me.

Describe CBC in one word: Evolving

My Job: I am one of 5 Operational Team Leader's within Customer Services, 3 full time and 2 job share whose role is to ensure that the service is fully prepared to provide an excellent standard of customer care to the residents of the borough. Customer Services is now spread over several sites. The Call Centre team being at Rowan House, face to face team covering Counter duties and Express Zone in the Colchester Library and Community Hub and Greenstead Local Housing Office, where we offer a face to face service for Licensing and Colchester Borough Homes. The Call Centre is open from 8.30 to 5.30 Monday to Friday and so there is always a Team Leader to cover both the early and late shift. A Team Leader is also present in the Library to support the team working there. Whichever site we are working at, it is a Team Leader's role to ensure that the team is ready for start of business and that all areas are covered and ready to react to service demands. In the event of any absences, Team Leader's ensure that trained staff are moved around so there are no gaps in the services provided.

There are team management duties that have to be performed such as one-to-one meetings, welcome back to work chats after illness, running team meetings, organising training, helping members of staff who have escalated enquiries and building the staff rota are just some of the many daily tasks performed by Team Leaders. Project work is also a large part of the Team Leader's role.

We constantly check customer wait times, re-allocate staff to areas where there is a need or serve customers ourselves to keep wait times to a minimum. We also monitor individual and team performance to ensure that a high standard of service is given and that any customer complaints are investigated and responded to.

The Customer Service Centre is constantly changing to react to customer demand and expectation, with new services and technology being introduced to improve service delivery. I enjoy the challenges that working in a busy customer service centre brings; the face to face contact with the public and resolving queries. It is very satisfying to see somebody leave the building that you have been able to help and take away their worries.

I have successfully completed the Colchester Learning Managers programme and gained a level 3 qualification in management through the Institute of Leadership and Management.

Community Research Officer

Service: Customer Services	Starting Salary: c£22k
Key Responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotion of research software to the organisation.• Data analysis and distribution.• Facilitate workshops, consultation and surveys.• Research and consult on surveys, focus groups, national and local census.• Promotion of the 2011 census.• Provision of research, acting as a consultancy service as well as conducting in house research for services.	
Qualifications	Skills/Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bachelors / Masters Degree in a relevant subject, or equivalent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have knowledge and understanding of research methods.• Technical knowledge of analysis tools.• Partnership working.• Have strong IT skills.• Have excellent communication skills, both written and spoken.• Be able to explain technical terms to members of the public.• Have time management skills and organisational ability.• Be able to work alone and as a part of a multi-disciplinary team.

Cathryn, Community Research Officer

Started working for CBC: August 2002

I joined CBC because: The job was closely related to the degree I had just completed.

Describe CBC in one word: Forward-thinking

My Job: Quite often there are urgent data requests made by teams in the organisation which have to be responded to in a timely manner. Sometimes it can come from a local Councillor who, for example, may want an age profile of their ward.

Meetings occur with colleagues to design and devise surveys and then there is training which we provide on research software; this mainly happens on a one-to-one basis which can be demanding on our time.

Time is often spent analysing government statistics and interpreting them as well as analysing other survey data. Data is provided to managers in the organisation to help shape policies through the provision of evidence etc.

Partnership working with other local authorities about data sharing is not unusual. At the moment there are a lot of meetings about the Census, on a local, regional and national basis.

In team meetings we discuss the projects that we are working on to see where there is overlap and what can be shared amongst the team. We each specialise in analysis of areas so we can share ideas and knowledge.

I have just completed the Council's Learning Managers programme, which means I have a level 3 qualification in management through the Institute of Leadership and Management.

There is a constant need to keep up to date with central government in order to support big changes.

Planning Policy Officer

Service: Commercial Services	Starting Salary: c£22k
<p>Key Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of Local Plan and supporting documents (setting out potential development areas and job growth over next 15-20 years). • Linking growth with external partners such as health, highways and education. • Providing advice on planning applications in accordance with local and national policies. • Consultation with town and parish councils and other stakeholders. 	
Qualifications	Skills/Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership of Royal Town Planning Institute. • Accredited course MA in town planning, spatial planning, environmental planning. • Degree in a relevant subject area (such as Town Planning, Geography, Environmental Science etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of planning regulations. • Sustainability knowledge. • Partnership working. • Strategic thinking – planners with a vision for future growth. • Have strong IT skills. • Have excellent communication skills, both written and spoken. • Be able to explain technical terms to members of the public. • Have time management skills and organisational ability. • Be able to work alone and as a part of a multi-disciplinary team.

Chris, Planning Policy Officer

Started working for CBC: August 2012

I joined CBC because...of the promotional opportunities whilst remaining in local government. Bigger authority = greater career prospects.

Describe CBC in one word: Progressive

My Job: I am mainly desk-based, researching issues and interpreting national and regional planning policies and transforming these into locally distinctive policies for Colchester. It is important to gain best practice from other authorities and use it for Colchester.

Partnership work involves meeting with local organisations, the County Council, Highways and Education and consulting with Councillors and members of the public. A Planning Policy Officer also facilitates discussion between Parish Councillors, Borough Councillors, the public, landowners and developers – this may be done through workshops and other consultation events.

Work is very much on a long-term time scale but when it gets close to publishing a document there are huge pressures on time which can be very demanding and challenging. However there is a lot of satisfaction to be gained when deadlines are met and going out and about consulting with various groups and organisations.

Some of the reports I write have to be examined by the Planning Inspectorate and need to be passed by this body, otherwise policies soon get out of date. Once the main reports are 'adopted' they last 5-10 years, although supporting documents are constantly updated and monitored during this time. Changes from central government can mean updating and amending policies to keep these up-to-date.

There is a reliance on each other in the team, working together and drawing on experience, skills and knowledge. We also take a lot of pride in producing Colchester's Local Plan, which is one of the best in the area.

Trainee Estates Officer

Service: Resource Management	Starting Salary: c£18k
<p>Purpose of the Role:</p> <p>The Estates Service manages and maintains the Council's commercial and industrial properties that include town centre shopping centres, shops on housing estates, industrial units, offices, leisure properties and various other land and property interests. The role entails liaising with landlords and tenants over matters such as property valuations, rent reviews, lease renewals and managing repairs. We also oversee property acquisition, disposal and compulsory purchase orders as well as have responsibility for compiling and maintaining an Asset Register, Property Terrier and registration of the Council's land and property interests. We have to undertake an annual revaluation of the Council's property assets and continually review property to identify surplus or under-used land and property assets for sale or alternative uses. Finally, we manage a planned maintenance programme and building projects.</p>	
<p>Key Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist the Estates Service with the management of the Council's commercial and industrial properties including arranging new lettings, negotiating rents and inspecting properties to ensure tenants are meeting their lease obligations. • Prepare reports and valuations on land and property for asset management, sales and development schemes. • Participate in the sale of surplus assets and the purchase of land and property required for Council schemes. • Use new technology to maintain up to date property records and generate reports on the performance of property assets. 	
Qualifications	Skills/Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Estate Management or equivalent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting with a basic knowledge of land and property issues and developing through a structured training programme involving part-time study and on the job learning leading to qualification as a Chartered Surveyor. An Estates Officer's salary can rise to c£36k upon completion of their studies and attainment of the relevant experience.

Emma, Trainee Estates Officer

Started working for CBC: October 2000

I joined CBC because: I wanted to work for a larger company after gaining a business qualification working for a small family firm.

Describe CBC in one word: Community

My Job: I completed my Estate Management Degree in November 2009. Since then I have been working towards my APC which will enable me to work as a Chartered Surveyor.

The Council were very supportive throughout my degree which took 5 years in total. As the degree was completed through distance learning I was allowed to take a study day each week to work on assignments and revise for exams. My team were also very helpful and assisted greatly with any queries I had as I progressed.

The nature of property management and valuation means that a typical day doesn't really exist. Our portfolio of land and buildings is quite diverse meaning there is the scope to be involved in lots of interesting cases.

Part of our role is to ensure the Council's leased out properties are being maintained in accordance with the lease. Therefore every property within the portfolio must be inspected on an annual basis. This involves checking the terms of each lease and then visiting each property and meeting with the tenant.

All of our properties are split between the surveyors; I am primarily responsible for any queries relating to Housing properties and the Council's shopping parades. The Housing cases will range from the valuation and disposal of land to the removal of restrictive covenants on right to buy conveyances. The shopping parades are slightly more management intensive as there are regular rent reviews, lease renewals and property maintenance issues to deal with.

Although the Council is a large organisation the Estates section is a small team of 7 people. We work closely together on all of our cases which enables us to share ideas and discuss any problems we may be having. We are often asked to give property advice to other teams within the Council which means we are exposed to how other sections operate and we get to deal with lots of interesting people and cases. The Council is also a very sociable place to work and I have met a lot of good friends through my job.

Environmental Health Officer

Service: Professional Services	Starting Salary: c£26k
<p>Purpose of the Role:</p> <p>Environmental Health Officers ensure that places where people live or work are safe and hygienic. Their job is to inspect premises to see that health standards are maintained and to ensure that there is minimal risk to the public, eg customers in a restaurant.</p>	
<p>Key Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an environmental health inspection and enforcement service to comply with statutory obligations and policies which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inspecting and advising on housing conditions. - issues of water, air, noise and contaminated land pollution. - inspection of food premises and investigation of food complaints. - enforcing health and safety. • Maintain all records and prepare letters, reports and documentation. • Provide advice to the public and other organisations on environmental health matters by means of talks, training and day to day contact. 	
<p>Qualifications</p>	<p>Skills/Experience</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc Degree in Environmental Health, Biology, Chemical Engineering or Food Science. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good communicator, both verbally and in writing. • Ability to be organised and use own initiative. • Good “people” skills. • Have strong IT skills. • Knowledge and understanding of enforcement legislation and current environmental issues. • Community minded. • Environmentalist. • Be able to work as a part of a multi-disciplinary team as well as with minimal supervision.

Leigh, Environmental Health Officer

Started working for CBC: October 2006

I joined CBC because: I moved to Colchester from London and had gained experience working for London authorities and wanted to work for a more rural authority. Colchester has the diversity of urban and rural areas which makes the job more challenging and interesting.

Describe CBC in one word: Motivating

My Job: In this job everyday is different. The cases you deal with are different and the types of people you meet are just as diverse.

One case I recently dealt with and is still ongoing is one of the most challenging I think I will come across in my career. I was called to a property by the Police because they suspected a man had died in his flat but they were unable to gain access because of the amount of rubbish in the building. I kitted up and my colleague and I went straight to the property. What we arrived at was one of the worst "Filthy and Verminous" properties we had ever come across. There was rubbish and rotting food from the floor to the ceiling in all three rooms.

We had to climb up and over the piles of rubbish to see what we could find. Fortunately we did not find a dead body and the man was found safe and well. Pictures were taken and legal notices were drawn up to the owner, to ensure the property was cleared of rubbish and disinfected. This will be a particularly satisfying case once the property is cleared, because the 'after' pictures will show the dramatic change.

Meeting different types of people and characters is what I like most about this job. People are so grateful to you if you help them with a problem they are having, however small it is. If it makes a difference to them, then I'm happy. Some cases are more challenging than others but I use all the powers given to me to solve problems and nuisances.

Colchester Borough Council is a brilliant employer because it gives you the support you need to carry out your job to the best of your ability. Plus Colchester is a fantastic town to work in because of the diverse areas it is made up of.



Adrian Pritchard, Chief Executive

Why I chose local government

It chose me. I failed my GCEs (GCSEs A-C level) and was presented with a number of options:

I could have got a job as a Trainee Bank Manager.

I could have been a trainee manager of an independent electrical goods shop.

Or I could join Hampshire County Council as a Clerical Assistant. I did this because I felt they offered me more opportunities and training.

How did I get to where I am today

- Worked for Hampshire County Council for 11 years doing clerical/administration jobs.
- Did lots of part-time study (day release or evenings doing ONC and HNC qualifications).
- Obtained two professional qualifications in Human Resources ending up as Industrial Relations Officer for Hampshire County Council.

Got upset at not getting a managerial job in a restructuring in Hampshire so,

- Went to Essex County Council as a Human Resources Manager for 4 years. Did industrial relations; management development and pay and conditions of service work.
- Became Assistant County Personnel Officer with Buckinghamshire County Council for 3 years from 1988 to 1991. Undertook recruitment and selection; management development; organisational development and staffing structures work.
- Moved (got another job) in Suffolk County Council as their County Personnel Officer (Director of Human Resources) for 10 years. Also studied part-time again for my Masters in Business Administration Degree from Birmingham University.
- In 2001 I joined Colchester Borough Council, firstly as an Executive Director responsible for regeneration, housing, sport, leisure and community development before I was promoted in August 2004 to become Chief Executive of Colchester Borough Council.



Ann Hedges, Executive Director

I have had a varied career, working in a number of sectors. There has never been a “grand plan” and I have enjoyed all the jobs and sectors I have worked in, each has offered a different range of experiences and allowed me to gain new skills.

My career started after I gained a very average degree in Economics & Politics in 1984.

- Next five years spent in retail bookselling, a number of jobs with increasing responsibility ending up with managing my own store.
- Took on a Head Office role for a chain of bookshops in Marketing and Buying.
- 1991 made redundant and went back into education full time to complete an MA in Human Resource Management.
- Worked for the University where I did my MA undertaking a research project and part-time lecturing.
- Moved to a small consultancy specialising in HR and Training and giving advice to small and medium sized businesses.
- Age 34 sold my house and resigned from my job to go travelling for six months.

My late gap “year” gave me a chance to reevaluate and when I returned I secured a six month contract with a big London Local Authority running a major change programme. This led to the next set of roles:

- Ended up staying at the London Authority for five years doing a range of jobs; service reviews, new customer strategy and ended up as Assistant Chief Executive working on policy development and support to the Chief Executive
- Time to move out of London!
- Moved to Colchester Borough Council as a Head of Service. Within three months had the opportunity to act up as Executive Director and was subsequently permanently appointed.
- Still an Executive Director at Colchester Borough Council nearly six years on, but have had a range of roles. My main focus today is people and performance, with a diverse remit including managing the budget strategy.

While I didn’t set out to work in local government, I have found my home! My experience in the private sector has been invaluable and the combination of private and public sector and consultancy is extremely useful.

I have taken opportunities as they arise and believe hard work and a bit of luck have paid off for me.



**Gareth Mitchell,
Head of Commercial Services**

- Studied for BA Dual Honours in French and Business Studies at Sheffield University – I was good at languages and wanted to work in the motor industry.
- Recruited to the Marketing and Sales function at the Ford Motor Company in 1989 on the graduate milkround.
- 12 years and 8 different jobs at Ford performing a wide variety of marketing, sales and communications roles both nationally and internationally. The last 6 years were in management roles.
- Decided in 2001 to “downshift” to achieve a better work/life balance by working nearer to home and more flexibly. Appointed Communications Manager at Colchester Borough Council.
- Appointed as Organisational Development Manager in 2005 prior to taking up a 2-year secondment to the council’s Senior Management Team as Head of Enterprise and Communities.
- Appointed in 2008 to second senior management position as Head of Life Opportunities, running a broad set of services (Housing, Sport and Leisure, Parks and Recreation, Community Partnerships) and responsible for around 550 staff and a budget of £12 million expenditure and £6 million income.
- Appointed to third senior management position in 2012 as Head of Strategic Policy & Regeneration, responsible for the future development of the Colchester borough.

WORK EXPERIENCE

During the year we offer many individuals of different ages and abilities a variety of opportunities for voluntary work experience with our Services. The length of the placement varies according to the needs and interests of the individual applicant as well as the resources and workload of the department hosting the placement. Whilst we continually receive large numbers of enquiries about work experience, we aim to consider each request on its own merits and offer such opportunities to people where this is possible.

The most frequently requested placements include:

- General Clerical
- Customer Services
- Museums
- Park Ranger
- Financial Services
- Planning Services
- Human Resources
- Strategic Research
- Legal Services
- Environmental Health
- Sports Centres
- Events Management
- Communications
- Crematorium & Cemetery
- Democratic Services
- Regeneration and Architecture

If you are particularly interested in an area not covered by the above list we are happy for you to contact us to demonstrate why you want to gain experience of this field and what skills you will bring to this role as we view work experience as a mutually beneficial arrangement. We will contact the relevant manager on your behalf in an attempt to secure you a placement.

A summary of the work experience application process is as follows:

1. Application for work experience sent to michelle.lay-flurrie@colchester.gov.uk – your application should include a current CV, covering letter explaining why you would like to work in local government, what service area you are interested in and the timescales for your proposed placement. We will send you an email or letter acknowledging receipt of your voluntary application.



2. Request sent to relevant manager/s and logged centrally by HR for annual reporting purposes. The request will be considered within 5 working days, where this is practical. All placements will be offered subject to a satisfactory informal interview with the hosting manager, ideally at least 4 weeks before the placement is due to start. It is the responsibility of the applicant to arrange this interview.



3. HR will send notification of the final decision within a further 3 working days, where this is practical. If provisionally successful the applicant will receive details of the hosting manager to arrange their interview, which will be 20-30 minutes in length. The placement will only be confirmed by HR or the manager if the interview is satisfactory. Failure to attend an interview will result in the immediate withdrawal of the provisional offer, unless in exceptional circumstances (eg the illness of the candidate).

You may originally be from Colchester or the surrounding area, or have lived in the town for some time whilst you have been undertaking your studies, but are you aware of the grand plans the Council has for turning Colchester into a central hub of the eastern region and making this a place where students will want to stay once they have graduated?

Over the next 15 years, the east of England will grow faster than any other region in the country. Colchester has been earmarked to grow sustainably in response to this – with 18,800 new homes by 2023 and 14,000 new jobs by 2021. Whilst we have an exceptional heritage, some areas have become run down but now we have the opportunity to regenerate these areas as the town grows creating vibrant new communities, mainly on previously used sites.

New jobs, homes, shops, transport links and community facilities will be created across four major regeneration areas – the Town Centre, North and East Colchester and the Garrison.

Town Centre

Colchester is a unique place. The legacies of 2,000 years of history exist alongside 21st Century culture which brings challenges and opportunities. However, Colchester is more than Britain's oldest recorded town and in recent years there has been a greater awareness of the benefit that an enhanced built and natural environment can bring to an historic centre.

Change is inevitable; places cannot stand still. They must grow, adapt, modify and modernise in a way which instils character, variety, richness and distinctiveness in the place. Colchester is well positioned for the new developments that will make it an even better place to live, visit, study, work and do business.

Plans to improve the wider town centre are now underway with proposals being developed to reduce traffic and create a better pedestrian experience with more public spaces for events and activities and better links for cyclists ensuring that Colchester continues to be a vibrant place during the day and in the evening.

Colchester's night time economy has been awarded Purple Flag status by the Association of Town and City Management, which recognises great hospitality and a positive experience for night-time visitors.

North Colchester

To the North of the town, alongside the A12, lies a 100 hectare development site. Plans for the area will see the creation of 1,500 new homes and new employment areas to create up to 3,500 new jobs.

The site is already home to our newest local landmark, the Weston Homes Community Stadium. As well as being Colchester United Football Club's new home, the venue also offers space for concerts, events, community space for Colchester United Community Sports Trust to develop its programme of activities and conference facilities for up to 400 people.

East Colchester

In East Colchester an exciting new waterside community is emerging at the Hythe, the town's former port. The £13m regeneration programme will create a mixed use development alongside the River Colne with 100,000 sq ft of commercial space, 2,000 new homes and improved transport links.

The transformation of the area is already underway with new housing, employment areas, community centre, nursery and student accommodation for the University of Essex at University Quays.

Garrison

Colchester has been a Garrison town for hundreds of years and the £1.5 billion private finance initiative (PFI) development of a new modern Garrison in the town has shown a further 35 years commitment to Colchester by the Ministry of Defence.

As well as creating improved accommodation and facilities for service personnel, land released by the MoD as a result of the new development will be used to create a sustainable mixed use urban village close to the town centre.

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Politics at a national UK level has been a central topic of interest in recent years, particularly in terms of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) designed to tackle the country's large deficit and to address the problems created by the global recession.

Similarly, you will no doubt be aware that as a result of the CSR, public sector budgets are being reduced and savings need to be made right across government departments. The CSR announcement tells us in general terms how much and where the Government will spend the public sector finances. Over the last four years we have been awarded the following cash settlements from Central Government by way of our core annual grants:

- **2011/12:** £10,500,000
- **2012/13:** £10,700,000
- **2013/14:** £8,500,000
- **2014/15:** £9,100,000

We use five tracks in our budget strategy and these are:

1. Income generation
2. Efficiencies, including a series of Fundamental Service Reviews
3. Total Place – projects with local partners to look at how we reduce duplication
4. Shared services
5. Cuts and reductions.

Looking at how we deliver services is not just about making efficiencies, but it is an opportunity to make a dramatic shift in the way we deliver services to ensure we are able to respond to the current economic climate and that they are fit for purpose in the future.

With the above points in mind, going forward we are going to need to really transform the way in which we do things and not be afraid to do things differently to how they have been done before, and one of the keys to the success of this approach will be the attitudes and commitment of the people we employ. Our officers are already contributing to the above processes, either in terms of being based in Services that are under review or, more simply, by submitting their own ideas on how the Council can meet its savings target.

So whilst the future of local government may be a little uncertain, we believe that it is genuinely an exciting and challenging time to be working at the heart of local politics.

This pack has been designed to give you a basic overview of:

- What local government is and how ordinary people from all walks of life are involved in the decision-making process on behalf of the people that they serve.
- The services Colchester Borough Council in particular provides to residents, visitors, business owners and workers.
- What the benefits of working for our Council are as well as the range of achievements that we aspire to and the diverse choice of professions that we employ people to do.
- The varied workload that our people do on a day-to-day basis and the careers that they build and develop with us.
- The Council's application process for gaining valuable unpaid work experience in a Service area of particular interest to help enhance your CV.
- An insight into what Colchester will be like in the future and the opportunities for graduates wishing to remain in the area after they leave university.

If you would like any further information about working for Colchester Borough Council, please contact our Human Resources department on 01206 282112 or email HRServiceCentre@colchester.gov.uk

For details of our current vacancies, please take a look at our website where you can also register for electronic job alerts: www.colchester.gov.uk/jobs (please note that if you are a full-time student there are legal restrictions on the number of hours you can work during the week and you should therefore bear this in mind when applying for jobs whilst still at University).

Thank you for your interest in Colchester Borough Council.