



We are Colchester



Colchester
City Council

We Are Colchester Board Meeting

22 May 2025

Decisions & Actions

Board Present:

Simon Blaxill - Chair, Simon Mead – Colbea, Mark Jarman-Howe – St Helena, Cllr David King – Colchester City Council (CCC), Alison Andreas - Colchester Institute, Cllr Lee Scott – Essex County Council (ECC), Andy Burgess – ECC, Cristina Huddleston – Community360.

Board Apologies:

Pam Donnelly – CCC, Lucy Johnson – University of Essex, Alison Jennings – Homes England, Laura Eardley – Hiscox, Pam Cox MP.

Others Attending:

Clare Ratcliffe – CCC, Scott Gray-Chick – CCC, Matt Sterling - CCC, Richard Kendrew – CCC, Lindsay Barker – CCC, Matthew Brown – CCC, Jason Lowe – North Essex Heritage, Steve Eke – CCC, Alex Jeremy – ECC, Adam Fox (for Pam Cox MP), Ellen Clark-Romain – ECC, Bryony Dick – ECC, Rob Willis – ECC, Simon Thorp – CCC.

1. Apologies, Declarations of Interest

- a. Apologies were noted from Pam Donnelly, Lucy Johnson, Alison Jennings, Laura Eardley and Pam Cox MP.
- b. There were no **declarations of interest**. The Register of Interests is updated periodically and published to the CCC website in line with government requirements.
- c. The Chair welcomed those who had not attended previous meetings.

2. Progress Report, Engagement and City Centre promotion Update

- a. Board **noted** a progress report and engagement update. This supplemented a report circulated to Board in advance which included a full working draft of the latest monitoring return to government covering the reporting period October 2024 to March 2025. The update summarised programme headlines, RAG statuses, risk register, progress highlights, key upcoming milestones, project spend and benefits realisation objectives.
- b. Board **agreed** that the monitoring return to government could be submitted.
- c. Board **noted** that Integrated Care Board (ICB) funding supporting the Heart of Greenstead Hub project remained secure.
- d. It was **agreed** that further detail on benefits realisation for the Digital Skills Hub project would be circulated to Board.
- e. Board **noted** that reference to St Helena as operator for the Holy Trinity Church project means St Helena Hospice.
- f. Board **noted** an update on recent engagement activity.
- g. Board **noted** an update on city centre promotion including communication objectives and public awareness of regeneration projects. Board also **noted** that promotion via channels including Instagram had generated qualified leads from businesses interested in learning more about the Digital Forum.
- h. It was **agreed** that some data shared with Board would be treated as confidential and not for publication.

3. Project Spotlight – Heart of Greenstead Hub

- a. Board **noted** a monthly progress report on the project which was circulated in advance.
- b. Board **noted** a presentation setting out the current project timeline and key milestones including finalising the cost plan, proposed delivery model including stakeholder engagement, planning application, procurement for a design and build contractor, contract award, commencement of works and completion within the government time and cost envelope. A selection of design visuals were also shared. Cost and operating model risk management (including potential impact on the library service) were also noted. The importance of minimising council governance issues and delays was also noted.
- c. Board **noted** that the delivery model for the Hub was different to that traditionally used, aimed at supporting community access to services.
- d. No questions were raised.

4. Levelling Up Programme

- a. Board **noted** an update on Colchester's Levelling Up programme which is governed separately by the Team Colchester Regeneration Board and encompasses St Botolphs Circus, St Botolphs Quarter, Bike Hub and Shopfront Grants.
- b. No questions were raised.

5. Progress and Risk Management

Board **noted** a recap of decisions to be actioned from the last Board meeting on 27 February 2025 and detailed updates by project.

5.1 Heart of Greenstead Hub.

- a. An update on timeline, highlights, headlines, key risks, RAG status (overall/time/cost), budget (committed spend/unmitigated overspend), upcoming milestones, community engagement and benefits realisation has been provided to the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategy and shared with the Board.
- b. Such updates will now be shared monthly.
- c. A site visit for Pam Cox MP is being arranged by Michelle Tarbun (project owner).

5.2 Holy Trinity Church

- a. The Heritage Fund bid is on track for submission. Material costs have been reviewed as these were higher than originally expected.
- b. Town Deal budget is on track to be used by September 2025, with procurement delays being managed.
- c. Re-opening of Holy Trinity Church is expected to take place by February 2028 subject to Heritage Fund award.

5.3 Trinity Square

- a. Drainage issues are being addressed with Anglian Water and ECC. The construction tender can then be issued.
- b. On site works are still expected to start by September 2025 and complete by January 2026.

5.4 St Nicholas Square

- a. Due to further unforeseen archaeology and construction requirements this project is now expected to complete by end of June 2025.
- b. Lessons are being actively shared across other Town Deal projects.
- c. Board also **noted** that Highways issues surrounding delivery of this project had been escalated with ECC by CCC's Leader.

5.5 Jumbo and Balkerne Gate

- a. All remaining Town Deal enabling funding will be available to North Essex Heritage for drawdown via purchase order.
- b. North Essex Heritage are progressing towards contractor appointment for the Heritage Fund delivery phase.
- c. Planning is underway for Balkerne Gate phase 2 public realm which now forms part of the Jumbo project, with due consideration for highways and other permissions which will be required to complete this element of the works.

5.6 Walking and Cycling Route – City Centre/Greenstead/University

- a. Route sections 1-3 (East Hill) – a new traffic regulation order has been advertised with a deadline for comments of 9 May 2025. Tender is expected to be issued by July 2025. On site works are due to commence by September 2025. Works are expected to take place for 7 months, with a decision required by ECC on extended working hours, review of Christmas embargo or a slippage in final completion to Summer 2026.
- b. Route sections 4-7 (The Moors) – Safer Streets bid for £500k has been submitted to enable safety measures of cctv, improved lighting and mobile wi fi provision.
- c. Route section 8 (Colne Causeway) is complete.
- d. Subject to TRO and procurement, full route completion is expected by Summer 2026.

5.7 Digital Forum

- a. Handover of the building to Colbea is on track for July 2025.
- b. Fit out is on track for August 2025.
- c. Opening with anchor tenants is on track for September 2025.
- d. Interest has also been expressed by several parties in managing the café.
- e. Wider land use is also being assessed and proactively managed.
- f. Potential for a summer We Are Colchester Board meeting being investigated.

5.8 5G

- a. Infrastructure works completed in April 2025.
- b. AR/VR tourism experience brief developed by Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service and Colchester Fibre. Procurement expected soon.
- c. On track for completion by December 2025.

5.9 Transformed Youth Facilities

- a. Townhouse works are in progress. July 2025 completion may not be possible though Essex Youth Service are working with contractors to manage potential slippage to September/October 2025.
- b. Comms are on hold until a firm date for re-opening is confirmed.
- c. Images of in progress works at the Townhouse were also shared.
- d. It was agreed that links between Essex Youth Service and Colchester Institute would be explored.

5.10 Lexden Gardens

- a. Positive feedback has been received from the site visit. A further visit is being arranged to enable a more detailed exploration of internal and external works on the housing scheme.
- b. Contractors are on track to complete Town Deal funded public realm works by early 2026 and regular updates are provided by Essex Housing.

6. Decisions and points noted

- a. Monitoring Return. Board had **noted** the draft return circulated and provided appropriate comments. It was **agreed** that the government monitoring return due by 27 May 2025 for the reporting period October 2024-March 2025 should be submitted.
- b. Next meeting. It was **agreed** that Board members would notify the Programme Office of their potential availability for an in-person meeting.
- c. Board also **noted** update on:
- d. Programme-wide progress and planned activities.
- e. Key risks including cost mitigations and contingencies.
- f. Heart of Greenstead project spotlight.
- g. Levelling Up programme progress update.
- h. Current project timelines, milestones and risk management (including any specific 'you said, we did' actions arising from the last Board meeting).

7. Next meetings

21 August 2025 – project spotlight Jumbo Water Tower and Transformed Youth Facilities

26 November 2025 – project spotlight to be confirmed

25 February 2025 – project spotlight to be confirmed

Meetings will be held on Microsoft Teams unless otherwise agreed.