



We are Colchester



Colchester
City Council

We Are Colchester Board Meeting

25 February 2026

Decisions & Actions

Board Present:

Simon Blaxill - Chair, Cllr Lee Scott – Essex County Council (ECC), Lucy Johnson – University of Essex, Cristina Huddleston – Community360, Kate Heslegrave – St Helena, Cllr David King – Colchester City Council (CCC), Pam Donnelly – CCC.

Board Apologies:

Alison Andreas – Colchester Institute, Simon Mead – Colbea, Pam Cox MP, Alison Jennings – Homes England, Andrew Burgess – ECC.

Others Attending:

Lindsay Barker – CCC, Matthew Sterling – CCC, Rory Doyle – CCC, Alex Jeremy – ECC, Clare Ratcliffe – CCC, Ellen Clark-Romain – ECC, Matthew Brown – CCC, Simon Hall – North Essex Heritage, Simon Thorp – CCC.

1. Apologies, Declarations of Interest

- a. **Apologies** were noted from Alison Andreas, Simon Mead, Pam Cox MP, Alison Jennings and Andrew Burgess.
- 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.

2. Progress Report, Comms and Engagement update

- a. Board **noted** an update on Programme-wide progress and planned activities, including project completion status and upcoming milestones. An advance Board Report had also been circulated.
- b. Simon Thorp highlighted that the Overall RAG status for the Heart of Greenstead Hub project and the Cost RAG status for the Walking and Cycling project would be discussed later in the meeting. It was also confirmed that an overspend for Digital Forum had been mitigated in-programme and that spend for the Jumbo/Balkerne Gate phase 2 project was ahead of forecast but without any budget pressure.
- c. Key benefits realised to date were also highlighted for Greenstead Liveable Neighbourhood (School Street traffic calming pilot speed cushions and crossing implemented in Hawthorn Avenue), Digital Skills Hub (business as usual 2 ½ years after project completion), St Nicholas Square (public realm completed with animation programme underway), Balkerne Gate phase 1 (public realm completed outside Mercury Theatre), Lexden Gardens (shortlisted in World Architectural News Residential Category), 5G (city centre infrastructure completed and ultra fast broadband being used at Digital Forum), Walking and Cycling (Colne Causeway crossing improvements completed in October 2023) and Townhouse/Stanway/Highwoods Youth Centres (all refurbished).
- d. Cllr David King commented on the importance of ensuring effective communications to promote the benefits and opportunities offered by 5G and the Digital Forum.

3. Project Spotlight - Holy Trinity Church

- a. Board **noted** that Town Deal-funded repairs and design work have been completed, effectively bringing the project to a close. For the construction phase, Colchester Amphora have been appointed as managing tenant and a Heritage Fund application for £2.65m of the £3.4m total required was being submitted on 25 February 2026. A decision is expected by June 2026. If successful, construction phase is expected to start in September 2026 and reopening of the building as a community hub in June 2028 (two-year programme).
- b. Board **noted** that whilst 80% of costs not included in the Heritage Fund bid are secured, some energy efficiency project features have been omitted due to cost. A further £300k will also be required for furniture, fixtures and fittings and Colchester Amphora will lead on fundraising for this.
- c. Cllr David King commented on the increasing importance of effective outreach for this project.
- d. Board **commended** Matthew Brown and the wider team for their efforts in developing the business plan and fundraising strategy for this project.
- e. Board **requested** that site visits be arranged to Holy Trinity Church.

4. Heart of Greenstead Hub and Essex Pedal Power

- a. Heart of Greenstead Hub. Board **noted** an update on the delivery plan and construction contract status for the Greenstead Hub, with construction scheduled to commence in Summer 2026 and complete in Summer 2027.
- b. Board **noted** the current risks relating to the complexity, operating model, lease and interaction with future Pride in Place funding for the Greenstead Hub.
- c. Pam Donnelly commented on the importance of gathering evidence of health impacts and community feeling and dialogue with the MP regarding future Pride in Place governance.
- d. Cllr David King agreed, adding that project complexity could bring additional risk. He added that Board should remain focused on its primary duty to oversee delivery of the Town Deal-funded project, with CCC currently underwriting the funding gap.
- e. Lindsay Barker commented that it was important that Cllr King and Cllr Scott worked closely to help ensure successful outcomes for the project.
- f. Board **directed** that the Overall RAG Status for the Greenstead Hub project should remain Red, with Time and Cost RAGs remaining Amber.
- g. Essex Pedal Power. Board **noted** that 900 bicycles have been distributed (100% of total).
- h. Simon Thorp commented that there was strong evidence to support the benefits of this project. See 4(i).

- i. The scheme now operates in Colchester (Greenstead), Clacton & Jaywick Sands, Harwich & Dovercourt, Basildon, Canvey Island and Harlow. An [independent evaluation](#) of Essex Pedal Power and two other Free Bikes schemes was launched at the UK House of Lords by Free Bikes Lead Ambassador and former Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Watson of Wyre Forest in October 2025. The report authored by economic consultants Volterra LLP found that Essex Pedal Power is high impact and low cost, assessing the impact of the distribution of over 12,000 bikes, including over 4,000 by Essex Pedal Power. Key findings were that for every £1 spent, Essex Pedal Power generates a Social Return on Investment of £12. This is much higher than Active Travel England's expectation for active travel schemes (£1.5 to £2). The bikes have a transformative impact on the mental health, on a per bike basis, this benefit is estimated to be around £10,000 per year. The Health Impact Assessment also estimates the schemes could prevent 58 new cases of disease annually, saving the NHS around £1 million each year. 32% of participant journeys previously made by car are now cycled, and journey times to schools for children receiving an Essex Pedal Power bike halved. Economic and social benefits of the free bikes included improving people's access to work and opportunities, increasing recipients' physical activity, contributing to the move towards Net Zero and boosting community cohesion. A film was also published showcasing the [Essex Pedal Power Journey in 2025](#).



5. Walking and Cycling

- a. Board **noted** an update on ECC governance process for approval of construction contract award and TRO for East Hill route sections 1-3. This is now expected from Cllr Bentley and Cllr Platt by end-February/March 2026. Contract award is expected in early March 2026, with soft mobilisation and contractor onboarding followed by construction between June 2026 and July 2027.
- b. Ellen Clark-Romain commented that as previously agreed all remaining Town Deal funding for the project would be used for East Hill route sections 1-3 with completion of route sections 4-7 (the Moors) subject to additional funding. Board **noted** that ECC hoped to prioritise works on the Moors after sections 1-3, with potential ECC and East Bay Mill developer funding support in addition to that from Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Safer Streets).
- c. Alex Jeremy commented that it may be worthwhile testing interest from the Mayoral Authority in supporting 'shovel ready' projects like LCWIP 4 and Greenstead Hub. Board **agreed** that this should be explored.
- d. Board **noted** that planning conditions had been discharged, compound arrangements confirmed (site close to Firstsite/Curzon) and listed building consent granted.
- e. Board **noted** that a communications strategy was under review and would ensure unified messaging. A key focus following contractor onboarding will be the Business Improvement District (BID) and Civic Society.
- f. Cllr David King commented that it was important for communications planning to be done before contractors are on board.
- g. Board **noted** that revised Department for Transport guidance had necessitated a design and installation review including floating bus stop proposals. Ellen Clark-Romain commented that the project could proceed.

- h. Board **noted** that potential pinch points between LCWIP 4 East Hill works and St Botolphs Circus works were being closely managed between CCC and ECC.
- i. Board **noted** that route section 8 (Colne Causeway) has been completed.
- j. Board **directed** that the Cost RAG Status for the project should be changed from Red to Amber.

6. Digital Forum and Townhouse Youth Centre

- a. Board **noted** an update on launch events for the Digital Forum (January 2026) and Townhouse Youth Centre (November 2025).

7. 'You Said, We Did'

- a. Board **noted** an update, which confirmed that all agreed actions from previous meetings had been completed or were in progress and on track.

8. Decisions and Items Noted

- a. Board **directed** that the Overall RAG Status for Greenstead Hub project remained at Red.
- b. Board **directed** that the Cost RAG Status for the Walking and Cycling LCWIP 4 project should be changed from Red to Amber.
- c. Board **requested** further details of an independent evaluation of Essex Pedal Power (see 4(i)).
- d. Board **directed** that Officers should explore with the new Mayoral Authority interest in funding support for 'shovel ready' projects like LCWIP 4 and Greenstead Hub.
- e. Board **noted** Programme-wide progress and planned activities (advance Board Report circulated).
- f. Board **noted** an update on Holy Trinity Church funding and managing tenant arrangements, with site visits to be arranged.
- g. Board **noted** a 'you said, we did' update on all projects.

9. Next meeting

- a. The next Board Meeting is on 13 May 2026 (MS Teams).
- b. In person site visits to Lexden Gardens have been scheduled for 11 and 18 March 2026.
- c. Site visits to Holy Trinity Church will be arranged.
- d. Dates of in person project completion and milestone events will be circulated on a case-by-case basis.