We are Colchester

Colchester City Council

We Are Colchester Board Meeting

30 September 2025

Decisions & Actions

Board Present:

Simon Blaxill - Chair, Pam Donnelly – Colchester City Council (CCC), Simon Mead – Colbea, Kate Heslegrave – St Helena, Cllr David King – CCC, Alison Andreas - Colchester Institute, Cristina Huddleston – Community360, Adam Fox (for Pam Cox MP).

Board Apologies:

Lucy Johnson – University of Essex, Alison Jennings – Homes England, Laura Eardley – Hiscox, Pam Cox MP, Cllr Lee Scott – Essex County Council (ECC), Andy Burgess – ECC.

Others Attending:

Lindsay Barker – Deputy Chief Executive CCC, Clare Ratcliffe – Engagement Specialist CCC, Glenn Crickmore – Youth Service Lead ECC, Matt Sterling – Head of Economic Growth CCC, Richard Kendrew – Heart of Greensted Project Manager CCC, Matthew Brown – Economic Regeneration Manager CCC, Michelle Tarbun – Head of Health Partnerships and Well Being CCC, Rory Doyle – Strategic Director CCC, Simon Hall – North Essex Heritage, Steve Eke – Business Development Manager Colchester Fibre, Atilla Pek – Interim Capital Accountant CCC, Frank Hargrave – Head of Museums, Culture and Tourism CCC, Jason Lowe – North Essex Heritage, Alex Jeremy – Place Regeneration Lead ECC, Ian Turner – Principal Transportation and Infrastructure Planner ECC, Rob Willis – Place Regeneration Strategy Manager ECC, Simon Thorp – Programme Manager CCC.

1. Apologies, Declarations of Interest

a. **Apologies** were noted from Lucy Johnson, Laura Eardley, Andy Burgess, Pam Cox MP and Cllr Lee Scott.

b. The **resignation** of Mark Jarman-Howe (St Helena) was noted, with Kate Heslegrave (St Helena) welcomed as Mark's **replacement**.

c. The Chair also welcomed Officers with specific agenda items.

d. 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, Engagement and City Centre promotion Update

a. Board **noted** a progress report. This supplemented a report circulated to Board in advance. The update summarised project progress, key upcoming milestones, programme and project level RAG statuses, headlines and key risks (in particular, Heart of Greenstead Hub and Walking and Cycling unmitigated cost risks and associated decisions required for 5G AR/VR Tourism and Trinity Square projects), other highlights and benefits realisation objectives.
b. Board also **noted** an update on recent and upcoming comms and engagement activity, including the St Nicholas Square project.

3. Project Spotlight – Heart of Greenstead Hub

a. Board **noted** a detailed update on the project, the wider health and housing context, rationale beyond bricks and mortar construction for 'investing to save' and the current scale of potential unmitigated cost risk (£2.5m) even after significant and diverse funding support. Board also **noted** the work in progress and City Council governance timetable associated with considering and approving the bridging of any funding gap.

b. Board **noted** the additional context and uncertainties provided by Cllr David King of devolution and local government reorganisation.

c. Board **noted** an overview from Rory Doyle on government's recently announced 'Pride in Place' strategy which identifies Colchester and Greenstead as a community-led funding beneficiary over a 10-year period – requiring detailed analysis to fully understand the timeline, milestones and potential alignment with existing work and funding. Board **agreed** that this work should be prioritised.

d. Board **noted** an update from Lindsay Barker that funding for this project must be in place before any tender award.

e. Board **noted** an update from Rob Willis that Essex County Council was currently undertaking a process of capital programme re-prioritisation.

f. Board **noted** guidance from Simon Thorp that tender evaluation should provide a detailed breakdown of the cost of project features which are currently in scope, compared with previous versions of the business case.

g. Board **agreed** that an additional meeting should be held in late October and meanwhile could not take any decision on paring back the project until the outcome of tender evaluation and City/County Council decisions on bridging any funding gap.

4. Urgent project consideraration – Holy Trinity Square and 5G AR/VR Tourism

a. Board **noted** updates from Matt Sterling (Holy Trinity Square) and Frank Hargrave (5G) on budget, spend, remaining budget and tender position for these projects. Board also **noted** the advantages and risks associated with pausing or stopping the projects to enable funding redistribution to the Greenstead Hub project. Board also **noted** benefits realisation commitments for the 5G AR/VR Tourism project agreed with government as a funding condition.
b. Cllr David King explained that whilst there had been objections to the Holy Trinity Square project, it was nonetheless central to improving the look and feel of the city centre, and Town Deal is a balanced programme.
c. Simon Mead commented that even if both of these projects were to stop, the total collective remaining budget of £1m would still be insufficient to bridge the Greenstead Hub cost gap.
d. Lindsay Barker stated that the Greenstead Hub was a flagship project and therefore redistribution of budget from these projects must be an option if no other means of funding the gap can be found.
e. Lucy Johnson commented in advance that on the strength of the information that has been provided thus far, if helpful now, she would be content to endorse an approach which would prioritise finding additional or repurposing funding to support the Heart of Greenstead project. Her sense is that this work was always at the centre of the Town Deal work with the intention to improve and support living environments.

f. Matthew Brown provided further detail of the potential consequences and impact on Holy Trinity Church of stopping the Holy Trinity Square project, including drainage, fire exits, windows, paving and intended future use of the square for income generation by the managing operator St Helena. Board noted that such impact may still need to be mitigated by assigning some funding to Holy Trinity Church project.

g. Board **agreed** that it would consider the case for pausing or stopping the Holy Trinity Square project at a meeting in October 2025.

h. Meanwhile, Lindsay Barker stated that city council procurement for Holy Trinity Square would commence.

i. All Board Members present **agreed and directed** that the 5G project should be stopped and unspent budget redirected to the Greenstead Hub project - Simon Blaxill, Pam Donnelly, Simon Mead, Kate Heslegrave, Cllr David King, Alison Andreas, Cristina Huddleston, Adam Fox (for Pam Cox MP), Alex Jeremy (for Cllr Lee Scott and Andy Burgess).

5. Walking and Cycling route City Centre to Greenstead and University project update

a. Board **noted** an update and timeline for the East Hill route section 1-3 tender, engagement, evaluation, planned award and on-site start.
b. Board **noted** that an application for £100k Safer Streets funding (with £1.1m ECC match funding) for cctv and lighting on the off-road route sections 4-5 had been successful.
c. Board **noted** that delivery is contingent on the East Hill tenders being within the current budget allocation for those sections of the route. If over budget, the funding allocations for LCWIP 4 will need to be reprofiled.
d. Board **noted** that progress on route sections 6 and 7 (Hythe Station Bridge - Greenstead Road) is currently deferred.
e. Board **noted** that Colne Causeway route section 8 was completed in October 2023.
f. Board **noted** that a further update would be provided after route section 1-3 tender evaluation.

6. Decisions, recommendations and points noted

a. Board **directed** that the 5G AR/VR Tourism project be stopped and unspent budget made available to the Heart of Greenstead Hub project.
b. Board **directed** that the Holy Trinity Square project should proceed to tender but no contractor appointment should be made until after a Board decision has been made on costs and available budget at its next meeting.
c. Board **recommended** that the City Council and County Council continue to consider all options to bridge any other current or emerging funding gap not covered by Town Deal budget, including the newly announced Pride in Place fund.
d. Board **directed** that it remained assured of the viability of the Walking and Cycling project, with an update on costs and risks to be provided following tender evaluation for route sections 1-3.
e. Board **directed** that an additional meeting be scheduled in late October 2025 to receive a full update on the outcome of Greenstead Hub tender evaluation and activities to identify additional funds. This additional Board meeting (on-line or in person, whichever maximises attendance) to be scheduled in late October 2025.
f. Board **noted** Programme-wide progress and planned activities, key risks including cost mitigations and contingencies, current project timelines, milestones and risk management (including any specific ‘you said, we did’ actions arising from the last Board meeting).
g. Board **noted** that a Levelling Up programme progress update would be provided at the next meeting.

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7. Next meetings

October 2025 – additional meeting to be confirmed.
26 November 2025
25 February 2026

Meetings will be held on Microsoft Teams unless otherwise agreed.