

Forward Plan reference number: Not applicable

Report title: Transforming Youth Service – Colchester Youth Centre refurbishment projects	
Report to: Tom Walker, Executive Director, Economy, Investment and Public Health	
Report author: Clare Kershaw, Director of Education	
Date: 28 November 2023	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: Colchester	

1. Everyone’s Essex

- 1.1 Investing in improved accommodation for three youth centres in Colchester will deliver on key commitments set out in Everyone’s Essex – Our plan for levelling up the county: 2021-2025.
- 1.2 The investment will support young people in Essex to fulfil their potential. The refurbished accommodation will provide young people with greater opportunity to access a variety of services and opportunities. Current and future young people attending the facilities will benefit from upgraded accommodation that caters for their needs and enables the youth centre to continue significantly improved employment, education and training opportunities and life chances for young people in Colchester, including those from deprived communities.
- 1.3 This includes supporting young people in Essex to fulfil their potential. The refurbished accommodation will provide young people with greater opportunity to a variety of services and opportunities. Current and future young people attending the facilities will benefit from upgraded accommodation that caters for their needs and enables the youth centre to continue significantly improved employment, education and training opportunities and life chances for young people in Colchester, including those from deprived communities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to the internal and external refurbishment works at three youth centres Town House, The Highwoods and Stanway in Colchester as set out in this report.
- 2.2 Agree that the Head of Infrastructure Delivery can sign the contract for the refurbishment works with Beardwell Construction Ltd subject to the final construction costs being within budget and representing value for money while meeting the scope of the grant funding available for this project.
- 2.3 Note the reprofiling of the existing capital budget for the works as per the profile stated in section 6.1 of this report.

3. Background and Proposal

- 3.1. Towns Fund
- 3.2. In January 2022 the outline business case for the Transforming Youth Facilities in Colchester, in conjunction with the Colchester Fund, was approved by Colchester Borough Council with funding to refurbish three youth centres in Colchester improving outcomes for the young people using the facilities.
- 3.3. The grant for £1.29m from Central Government via Colchester Borough Council is under the Towns Fund from central government. Scope and criteria for the Towns Fund included demonstrating a 20-year plus vision for Colchester with investments addressing known and well-evidenced challenges such as recovering from COVID, a growing population, engagement of young people in the labor market and society, high unemployment and health deprived areas. The ‘We Are Colchester’ vision statement laid out the priorities for the Towns Fund money; priorities were derived from surveys completed by over 1,000 residents such as a greener Colchester, more activities for young people, better cycle infrastructure and a more attractive public realm.
- 3.4. This project is one of the 16 chosen and sits under the Transformed Youth Facilities theme. It supports both ‘We Are Colchester’ and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) priorities, as well as those of the wider county of Essex.
- 3.5. This project will refurbish the Colchester Townhouse, Highwoods and Stanway Youth Centres, developing the Townhouse into a flagship youth centre in the heart of the town centre and a space fit for young people in the area for a long time to come. The refurbishments will provide a comprehensive range of improvements and extensions to current provision to ensure that Colchester’s young people have access to high quality facilities and professional support.
- 3.6. Lack of any significant investment over many years has led to a situation where the existing facilities no longer fully meet the needs of service users and consequently are not used to their full capacity.
- 3.7. **The benefits**
- 3.8. This project is to create state-of-the-art youth facilities in the heart of Colchester that address the most significant identified needs of local communities. Increases in poverty, including child poverty, and declining life expectancy in the most deprived local neighbourhoods illustrate the need for an increased focus on supporting young people, particularly in the wake of the adverse impact on young people of the COVID-19 pandemic (for example, on mental health, access to education/skills development and perceptions of the likelihood of achieving aspirations in the future).
- 3.9. The outcome from the refurbishment works at the youth centres will significantly improve employment, education and training opportunities and life

chances for young people in Colchester, including those from deprived communities, the benefits will be:

- Increased opportunities for young people to access skilled youth professionals
- Increased skills levels for young people within Colchester and surrounding areas.
- Increased access and opportunities for young people to support their wellbeing.
- Prospect for greater engagement and social mixing of young people within Colchester and surrounding communities
- Increased variety of services and opportunities available to young people
- Increased footfall to the Townhouse (and therefore town center).
- Improved physical health and wellbeing (e.g., due to bouldering facility and sports hall facilities)

3.10. **The works**

3.11. The refurbishment works are to be completed simultaneously to meet the June 2024 completion date required as part of the grant conditions. To achieve this work is required to start in early months of 2024.

3.12. Townhouse: a comprehensive range of improvements will be considered to ensure young people have access to state-of-the-art facilities and professional support. The unit will have to close whilst the refurbishment works are completed. The benefits of the works will provide the youth centre with an improved and modern learning environment for the pupils to learn and develop their skill base in comfortable and purpose-built surroundings. Areas such as a new climbing wall, basketball hoops, games area, studio, improved kitchen and café area

3.13. The Highwoods and Stanway Youth centres will receive a modest refurbishment including complete redecoration internally, improvement in IT infrastructure and smart technologies and new furnishings.

3.14. The proposals at all three youth centres meets ECC's Strategic Aim of helping people in Essex prosper by enabling young people to fulfil their potential, help people in Essex prosper by increasing their skills and help to develop capability, performance and engagement of our people.

3.15. **Procurement**

3.16. The Essex Construction Framework is a framework agreement set up by ECC with principal contractors appointed to the framework to carry out design and construction related works. The framework uses a two stage mini competition process to select the successful contractor. Following completion of the first stage of the tender process, a Pre Construction Agreement is entered into which requires the successful contractor to develop their design. A construction contract is then entered into following completion of the second stage of the tender process which requires the submission of the Final Tender Submission from the Contractor.

- 3.17. Due to the tight programme, the scheme was procured using the Essex Construction Framework (ECF) utilising a direct award contract which is an option under the ECF. Beardwell Construction Ltd, ranked 1 on their Lot and has been appointed to identify scope and carry out the associated design works. A Pre Construction Agreement was entered into with Beardwell Construction Ltd to enable them to work up their design. This agreement does not oblige ECC to enter into a works contract with Beardwell Construction Ltd only for the contractor to complete the preconstruction phase. Once the design has been finalised Beardwell Construction Ltd will be asked to submit a Final Tender.
- 3.18. The Final Tender submission will be assessed, and a construction contract will be awarded subject to the project being within budget, quality criteria being satisfactorily met, and the contractor having achieved required approvals.

4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:

- Provide an equal foundation for every child
- Develop our County sustainably
- Share prosperity with everyone

4.2 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high-quality environment
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

5 Options

5.1 Option 1 – do nothing (not recommended).

To do nothing would limit the youth centre's ability to deliver provision in Colchester and will impact the quality of life and stop the young people accessing the provision due to the poor quality of facilities. This option fails to meet the objective to improve and expand youth facilities for young people across Colchester.

5.2 Option 2 – approve the recommended proposal to invest in a programme of internal and external refurbishment works at the three Youth Centres in Colchester (recommended).

Refurbishing the existing youth centres will provide upgraded facilities and ensure positive outcomes for young people.

This option offers substantial opportunity to deliver Quality of Life and Health improvements by delivering better social outcomes via highly resourced youth Facilities.

The new facilities will extend the range of provision to young people, will significantly improve employment, education and training opportunities and life chances for young people in Colchester,

This option best meets the objective to improve and expand youth facilities for young people across Colchester and is therefore the recommended option.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The cost of the project will be £1.29m, which is entirely funded by grant funding from the Towns Fund, via Colchester City Council. There is no further funding required from ECC.

6.1.2 The funding is already included in the existing ECC capital programme but is profiled to be spent in 2023/24. This profile will need to be amended to reflect the latest timeline as shown in the table below:

Project Financial Statement										
Please select: Business Case Type		Invest to Grow								
Asset Category		Buildings								
£000		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Please only input into those cells shaded yellow		5 Year Total	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Future Years (ongoing per annum)	Prior Year Costs	TOTAL PROJECT COSTS
Capital Costs excluding Contingency		1,245	287	958	-	-	-	-	-	1,245
Contingency		45	10	35	-	-	-	-	-	45
Total Capital Costs (for Capital Programme)		1,290	297	993	-	-	-	-	-	1,290
Capital Funding										
Grant Funding - Town Fund		1,290	297	993	-	-	-	-	-	1,290
Please Specify Funding eg Basic Need Grant		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Please Specify Funding eg Basic Need Grant		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Identified External Capital Funding		1,290	297	993	-	-	-	-	-	1,290
Gap - ECC Borrowing Required		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revenue Costs										
Furniture & Equipment		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other (Please Specify)		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenue Costs (excluding borrowing)		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Borrowing Costs										
Estimated interest cost of borrowing		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Estimated MRP (Minimum Revenue Provision)		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Borrowing Costs		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenue Impact		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revenue Affordability Assessment (funded by)										
Existing allocation in MTRS		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
New funding required		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenue Budget		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cost Avoidance (non cashable)		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

6.1.3 The cost of the project breaks down into the following categories:

Transforming Youth Facilities	(£)
Construction	1,190,793
Internal fees	54,180
Contingency	45,213
Total	1,290,186

6.1.4 Any additional costs to support the delivery of the project will come from existing revenue budgets.

6.1.5 The final agreed specification for the project will be set such that the project will remain within the funding envelope available. In addition, there is a contingency value that would be used to fund any unexpected additional costs. In the event that this is not sufficient then any additional funding required would be subject to a separate decision.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 ECC has a duty to provide sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people.

6.2.2 Using a framework is a compliant route to procure a contract, but the framework must be used in a legally compliant manner and in line with the way the framework has been established.

6.2.3 A direct award should only be used where the framework specifically allows a direct award and the methodology for choosing the contractor to be awarded the contract is objectively established in the framework.

6.2.4 ECC must also be able to demonstrate that the award represents value for money.

7 Equality and Diversity Considerations

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.2 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8 List of Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

9.1 Business Case: Transformed Youth Facilities

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Tom Walker, Executive Director, Economy, Investment and Public Health	28.11.23

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Executive Director, Corporate Services (S151 Officer)	20.11.23
Stephanie Mitchener on behalf of Nicole Wood	