



OUR COLCHESTER  
*A BID to make new history*

# BID BUSINESS PLAN 2023 2028





*“All of us at the Mercury have been so impressed with the work of the BID over the last five years. It’s been great to build new partnerships across retail, commercial, public and charitable sectors. We look forward to continuing to promote our new City for both residents and visitors alike”*

Steve Mannix, Executive Director  
Mercury Theatre

# FOREWORD

**Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) hold a unique position within the business community in which they sit. Separate from the local authority and in the interest of businesses, BIDs have the opportunity and drive to bring additional value and projects into City Centres that would otherwise be ignored.**

Our Colchester BID has worked tirelessly over the past five years to deliver projects and initiatives for the City Centre businesses and visitors. With the addition of installations like the High Street Parklets, wayfinding artwork, and additional lighting alongside the development and implementation of three strategic papers, holding positions within key stakeholder groups to drive conversation and investment into the City Centre, Our Colchester BID has the city and its businesses at the heart of everything it does.

The list of projects delivered by Our Colchester BID could go on for pages. Within this Business

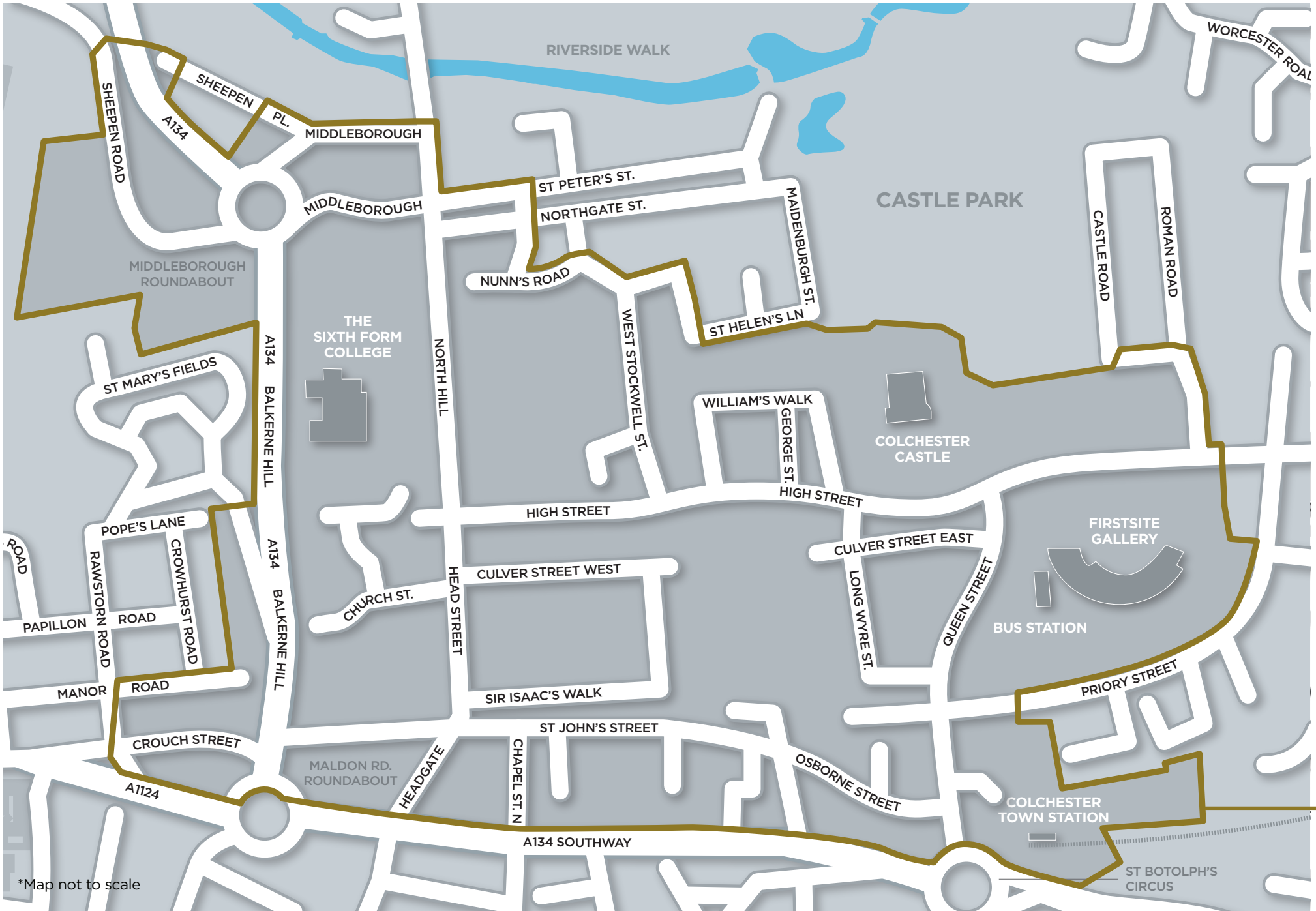


Simon Blaxill, BID Chair  
Kent Blaxill Properties

Plan we have set out some of our key deliverables over the past five years but also the BID's aims and aspirations for the future and how we hope to support you and our new city. With the new city status and the BID gaining momentum, the next five years promises to be exciting, full of new opportunities, and continued growth for the BID's ongoing projects.

As ballot approaches, Our Colchester BID could not be in a better position to support the City Centre. The BID needs your support to make the next five years a success for Colchester. Make sure to vote "Yes" for Our Colchester BID in June.





\*Map not to scale



# MEET THE BOARD



Simon Blaxill  
Kent Blaxill Properties  
and BID Chair



Michelle Reynolds  
COLBAC and BID  
Vice-Chair



Chris Morgan  
Metro Bank



David Robertson  
Culver Square  
Shopping Centre

The BID Board is made up of a majority of levy paying businesses complemented by non-levy paying businesses representing areas and sectors within the City Centre.

The Board benefits from the input of two observers from Colchester City Council to enable clear and frequent communications between our organisations. A rotation policy will be considered within the new BID term to enable the appointment of new Directors during the new BID term to bring fresh ideas and a new perspective.



Suki Dulai  
Flying Trade Group



Tim Field  
Birkett Long



Nancy Foster  
Fenwick



Andy Starr  
Colchester Pubwatch



Neil Peck  
Westbury Advisors



Dan Mitchell  
Kendan Group



Craig Newnes  
McDonalds

## THE BID ZONE

List of streets within BID zone available at [www.ourcolchester.co.uk](http://www.ourcolchester.co.uk)

# THE BID

Our Colchester are one of over 320 business improvement districts (BIDs) within the UK, with the first BID launching in 2005, you will now see BIDs in most towns and cities across the country. A BID is a business-led and business funded body formed to improve a defined commercial area.

Since being voted in by the businesses of Colchester City Centre in 2018, Our Colchester Business Improvement District (BID) has supported the new City Centre through potentially the toughest time for businesses in a generation.

From a nationwide lockdown due to the pandemic in March 2020, a cost-of-living crisis, energy crisis, and everything in between, the BID has taken every opportunity to step up and provide support where needed, carefully listening to the specific needs of our businesses and other organisations within Colchester City Centre.

The BID has enabled an investment of over £2.5million into the City Centre through the BID levy accompanied by an additional income through external funding of over £865k.

Alongside the additional funding, our strategies and visions have been used as part of larger applications

for successful central government funding such as the Town Deal and Levelling Up Fund enabling projects such as Kerbless Streets and Shopfront Improvement Grants equating to several hundreds of thousands of pounds in investment into the streets around the City Centre.

Over the last five years, our ambitions have been to drive Colchester forward as the best place to work, live, and visit. Through the pandemic, the BID formed the Covid Recovery Taskforce, a group made up of both County and Borough Local Authorities, Essex Police, Colchester MP Will Quince, Businesses, Health and more. The Taskforce enabled the formation of a Town Centre Covid Recovery Plan of which all partners signed up to enabling a cohesive and joined up approach to the effects of the pandemic on our businesses health and vitality.

As we edge towards a post-pandemic world, the BID is

## WE SAID, WE DID

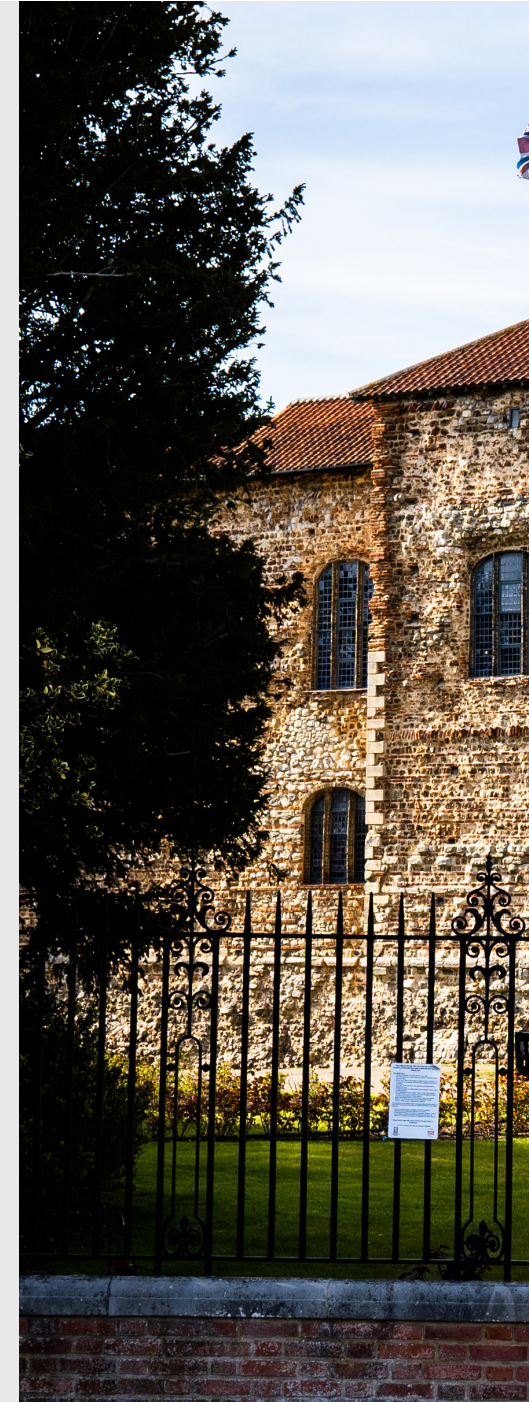
A strong combined voice  
Business Plan commitment  
2018-23

continuing to lead as a core business representative in the City through its formation of the Leisure Recovery Board, formation and chairing of the very first City Place Marketing Board following Colchester's successful bid for City Status and representing Colchester on a national scale through presenting as guest speakers at large conferences.

So as we move towards a new and exciting five year term, the BID has adopted its new direction. Our next five years will focus on supporting Colchester City Centre to be a place where businesses of all shapes and sizes can develop and thrive in a collaborative, engaging, mixed-use environment, with people and business firmly at its heart; fit for now and fit for the future.

*Sam Good*

Sam Good, BID Manager





# THE BID AND OPERATIONAL TEAM

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The Our Colchester BID team are the face of the BID. Led by BID Manager, Sam Good, the team are passionate about supporting our incredible business community and improving the City Centre as a whole.



Sam Good  
BID Manager



Sophia Beckford  
Operations Manager



Jess Walker  
Marketing Executive



Elliott Fluin  
Marketing Support



Vincent Geaves  
Business Crime  
Liaison Officer



Ethan Naish  
Street Ambassador



Elche Doluner  
Street Ambassador



Jarred Rolfe  
Street Ambassador



# HIGHLIGHTS 2018-2023



## FUTURE OF RETAIL VISION

In 2021, the BID formed a Retail Forum made up of retailers from across the City Centre enabling an open forum set-up for retailers, Colchester City council, Essex Police and more to come together to discuss current trends, issues and more to move forward proactively. The Retail Forum became the catalyst to the formation of the recently launched the BID's Future of Retail Vision for Colchester.

The Vision looks at how Colchester can support short-term challenges of the Retail sector alongside detailing how Colchester can become a trailblazer in its forward-thinking approach to how we can support the Retail sector to thrive in a fast-moving sector nationally. From driving inward investment from national retailers, to supporting in the reduction of retail crime, this vision is a core component of the BID's new term plans to ensure that the evolution of retail in Colchester is a positive one.

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14,000+

Street Ambassador visits

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1,000+

Public realm issues reported by the BID team

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10,000+

Visitors in attendance for Christmas Light Parade

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1<sup>ST</sup> IN ESSEX

Installation of Essex' first Parklets in the High street

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£850,000+

in additional income brought into the BID

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## LEISURE RECOVERY STRATEGY AND BOARD

**WE SAID, WE DID**  
Night Time Economy Support  
Business Plan commitment 2018-23

One of the hardest hit sectors from the pandemic was the leisure sector with nationwide restrictions on how consumers could engage with leisure services, minimal financial support and the highest amount of restrictions placed on their operations. The BID formed a Leisure Recovery Board and commissioned national-leaders in leisure strategies and support, Six Till Six to develop a detailed Strategy, Action Plan and Research document through business, stakeholder and policies research.

The Strategy was launched in August 2022 when we appointed our current chair, Steve Mannix Chief Executive of Mercury Theatre, to lead the Leisure Board forward. Since then, we have been successful in funding applications over £300k that has been invested into projects such as Purple Flag, Best Bar None, Leisure Resource Portal and Ask for Angela projects.

The BID also conducts quarterly Night Time Economy Audits inviting statutory partners and businesses to tour the City Centre between the hours of 8pm-4am to understand how our NTE businesses operate, the barriers they face and any challenges from a consumer-facing prospective such as poor lighting, feeling of safety and general cleanliness.

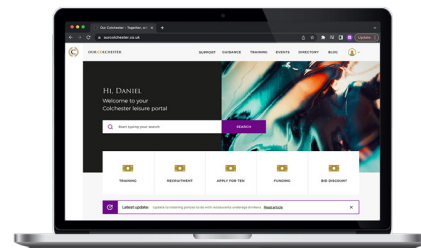




# CHRISTMAS IN COLCHESTER

Since its formation in 2018, the BID has taken on the role of planning and delivery overarching campaigns each Christmas to promote the City Centre's festive offering. With over 400,000+ views on our Christmas videos to 100,000's of visits to our Christmas in Colchester website page, we have ensured that our businesses have had a huge increase in coverage during the most important quarter for our City Centre each year. We have delivered two light switch-on

events with our latest event in Christmas 2022 involving a 300 strong light parade and over 10k visitors on the High Street, the event was a new way of looking at the traditional Christmas Light Switch-on and also enabled the City Centre to bring all of its light switch-on events into one night including Lion Walk, Culver Square, Mercury Theatre and Firstsite into one event. The BID has also delivered a raft of lighting installations in Crouch Street, St Johns Street and large trees across the City Centre alongside investment in the City's first ever LED adaptable Christmas Tree in 2022.



## Leisure Resource Portal

The BID has recently launched the first-of-its-kind Leisure Resource Portal for all employees working within the Leisure sector in Colchester City Centre. The portal holds a wealth of information from national and regional news, support mechanisms for applying for local authority processes such as Temporary Event Notices, Pavement Permits and more and an up to date Events page to support management to plan their rota's in line with high-level footfall events.

## Additional Income

The BID is passionate about turning the 'BID-pound' into more investment into the City Centre. Since our formation in 2018, the BID has leveraged over £865k in additional income through external funding applications through bodies such as the Home Office, Colchester City Council, Essex County Council, Section 106 pots, corporate sponsorship and more. Our ambition in the new BID-term will be to grow this sum even higher to enable to the BID's delivery to new heights.

## COLCHESTER KEY STATS

**OVER 620K**

page views since it's formation

**OVER 1.8MILLION**

impressions through our Christmas video's in 2021 and 2022

**OVER 10,800**

followers across our social media channels

**OVER 5600**

visits to our Colchester Business Awards voting page

**OVER 175K**

page views from November 2022 to May 2023

**OVER 100 BLOGS**

from 'things to do in Colchester' to business specific tours

**INTEGRATION OF AN AI CHATBOT**

to assist visitors with the ability to ask questions about the City Centre with immediate response

**INTEGRATION OF TRAVEL ASSISTANT SUPPORT**

on all business directory pages and 'getting here' page to assist visitors on the best modes of transport and directions to access their desired destination.

**ALL INCOLCHESTER EVENTS**

shared across national websites including Abellio, UKNews, Trivago and more

**CAPACITY PLANNING PROGRAMME**

for businesses to understand upcoming busy periods of events in the City Centre



# 750K+

visits to InColchester since its formation in August 2019



## Tap2Change

In the Summer of 2023, the BID launched its Tap2Change project, raising funds for local services that support those with street-based lifestyles. This involves the installation of artwork and a tap machine in a vacant unit within Lion Walk where passers-by can tap their debit, credit card or apple pay onto a tap point to donate £2 each tap. For year one, 100% of these donations go directly to Beacon House who offer a wide variety of services from food and drink to sleeping bags and cleaning services for those that do not have the funds to cover this themselves. The key objective of this project is to discourage those visiting the City Centre to hand cash to those begging or appearing to be sleeping rough.

### WE SAID, WE DID

Support and help drive initiatives to tackle rough sleeping and begging  
Business Plan commitment 2018-23

## CREATE FUND AND COLCHESTER COMMUNITY FUND

In 2019, the BID developed the Create Fund, a first of its kind in the BID industry that would enable local projects and events to develop concepts from an idea to reality. Events that wouldn't get off of the ground without a bit of seed-funding were supported with the Create Fund now supporting a wealth of events and projects including Invasion Colchester, Colchester Pride, Anti-Loo Roll Brigade Festival, Roman River Festival, Essex Photography Prize, Colchester Fringe Festival, Musicircus and much more.

Our Colchester BID are working in collaboration with One Colchester to provide a micro-grant funding pot available to any Colchester based small-scale voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector organisations. Applications will be reviewed on a regular basis with micro-grants being awarded to suitable candidates holding activities within the BID Zone.

# £75K+

worth of grants to local events and projects through Create Fund

## HIGH STREET PARKLETS

In 2021, the BID installed the first Parklets in Essex using designers, fabricators and an installation team all within 15-miles of the High Street. The project was an outcome of the pandemic with residents feeding back that the City Centre lacked outdoor seating areas to dwell with people less keen on spending long lengths of time in premises. The Parklets are now very popular through the day and often frequented by people of all ages. The built-in planting and silver birch trees have also enabled additional greening.



WE SAID, WE DID  
Improved Streetscape  
Business Plan commitment  
2018-23

*“Through partnership working the BID Team have helped the City Centre to prosper, encouraging new businesses to the town, helping established businesses and above all ensuring the City Centre is the heart of our community. As for the future we believe that the BID has a unique opportunity to help our City Centre to continue to grow, prosper and thrive.”*

Tracy Rudling CEO Community 360

# INDIE VISION

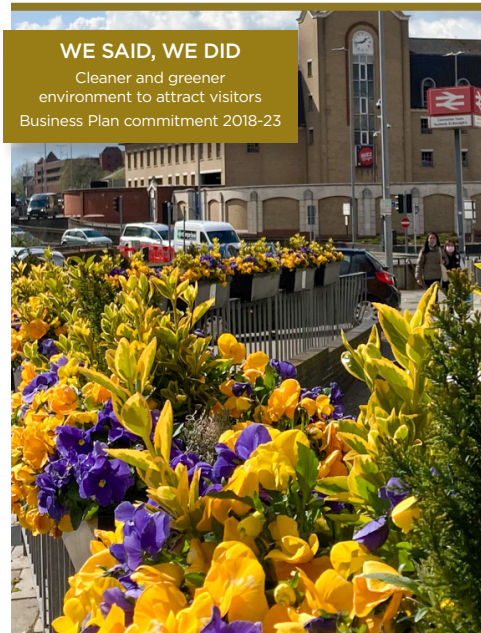
As part of the BID's commitment to allocate a ring-fenced pot of funding each financial year to an Independent Business Project Fund, an Indie Task and Finish Group was formed in 2019 with a business from each 'indie' street sitting on the group. We commissioned a tender for architects and place-makers to come up with an Indie Vision that enabled place making projects and a clear support plan. Local architects, HAT Projects, were commissioned and developed the BID's Indie Vision.

**£350K+**

invested in to the Independent Business Project Fund, since the formation of the BID

Since its launch, it has enabled the BID to access over £150k in external funding into projects such as the High Street Parklets, Short Wyre Street Archway and recently installed, Sir Isaacs Walk artwork. The fund also enables important projects such as the BIDs Welcome Pack, a pack for all new businesses into the City Centre which introduces them to what they can and cannot do, key contacts and more. Alongside this, it funds just over 100 hanging baskets free of charge for independent businesses each summer, annual celebration for Small Business Saturday, installation of festoon lighting under the BIDs 'Lighting the Lanes' in Sir Isaacs Walk, Eld Lane, Short Wyre Street, Pelhams Lane and Bank Passage.

**WE SAID, WE DID**  
Independent Business Project Fund  
Business Plan commitment 2018-23



## BID in Bloom

Alongside the BID's Parklets, the BID launched our BID in Bloom project in 2019 in order to improve the appearance of the City Centre. From our avenue of flowers on Queen Street to our promenade planters on Middleborough, the BID now delivers a wealth of summer and winter planting on top of our Indie in Bloom project. This projects not only supports the greening of the City Centre but also supports the reduction of air pollution. In 2022, the BID won a Silver Gilt Award as part of the Anglia in Bloom awards for our installations alongside winning the BID Category.

# CITY STATUS

The BID supported Colchester City Council's application for City Status as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee through our Letter of Support. Having been successful, the BID has been working closely with the Council to maximise the opportunities that this brings for business in the City Centre. The BID now chairs the Colchester Place Marketing Board made up of all key groups in Colchester including One Colchester, Creative Colchester, We Are Colchester alongside University of Essex, Colchester Institute, Wilkins and Sons and more. The group is the first of its kind to be formed with the key ambition of aligning ambitions for the greater good of Colchester's future.



## BIG EAT OUT

A perk for employees who work in the City Centre. A £5 food voucher for selected hospitality venues to promote trying new places to eat and making Colchester an enjoyable place to work. With an additional spend of over 40% for those using the vouchers, we were able to support our workers to try new eateries out for their lunch and explore different cuisines that they may not have usually tried.

**WE SAID, WE DID**  
Loyalty/Reward scheme for office workers  
Business Plan commitment 2018-23

# ENGAGEMENT WITH OUR BUSINESSES

It is of the utmost importance that we continue our high level of engagement through a broad variety of communication methods with our businesses. We will continue to provide regular, meaningful and open lines of communication throughout our next term, continuing in person meetings, engagement through the Street Ambassadors and traditional written and email correspondence, along with new and innovative methods to ensure businesses are well informed and up to date.

We fully understand that our levy payers want to be engaged with in a variety of ways to ensure that businesses will be able to see what we have delivered and tell us what they want in our second term.





**WE SAID, WE DID**  
Street Ambassadors  
Business Plan  
commitment 2018-23

*“We have been impressed with the work undertaken by the BID team, and their commitment to improving the City Centre and supporting the businesses located there. The levels of engagement with us have been excellent and we are excited about the plans for the future.”*

Guy Longhurst  
Managing Partner, Ellisons Solicitors

## Our consultation on the BID’s development and programme of delivery into the new term have included:

### 1-2-1 meetings

Online and in-person meetings with levy payers to discuss the second term.

### Street Ambassadors

Over 14,000 interactions registered through our database over the last five years between our businesses and three Street Ambassadors. All interactions are logged in details and used to support the formation of new plans, evolution of existing plans and making sure we are delivering in line with the wants and needs of our businesses.

### Vision and Strategy engagement

Through the formation of our Future of Retail and Leisure strategies respectively, we have engaged with hundreds of City Centre businesses on their wants and needs alongside stakeholders, partners, and residents.

### Surveys

Distribution of printed and digital surveys including Annual Surveys, PSPO Feedback, Christmas Feedback and more.

### E-Communications

Weekly digital newsletters targeted at levy payers to update on ongoing activities, business social event and more.

### Website

The Our Colchester website is a hub of information on all BID projects, press releases and City Centre news.

### Social Media

Daily updates through our Our Colchester and InColchester social media channels to inform of current news and upcoming events.

### BID Forums and Boards

Our quarterly business socials have been planned in advance to cover key topics of the City Centre and enable businesses to network and contribute to planning of new projects. Our forums and boards such as the Retail Forum and Leisure Recovery Board have enabled sector specific topics to be business-led from the bottom up to ensure we remain consistent in our approach and up to date. The BID also attends monthly Pubwatch to update night-time economy businesses on sector specific topics and investment.

### Residents

The BID has engaged with over 500 Colchester residents recently to discuss what they want and need from the City Centre with this evidence being used in our latest Future of Retail Vision and more. The BID is also in the process of setting up a Young Persons Panel to prioritising the voices of young people in the future development of the City Centre.

*“We have received such great support from both the projects and marketing elements of the BID. The team is always very helpful with any questions or queries, and marketing is always active to promote our store and shows interest in our business.”*

Joanna Seager,  
Store Manager, Hotel Chocolat

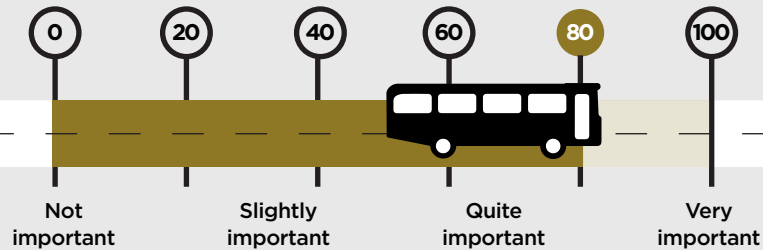
*“This is a great BID, able to speak up for you with the City Council and our partners. Year on year they have grown in strength, capacity, and influence. They are tough, determined but constructive advocates for the needs of business, and I applaud all they do.”*

ClIr David King  
Leader of Colchester City Council

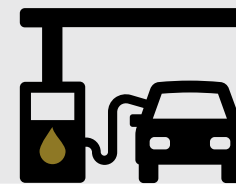


# BID TRANSPORT SURVEY

We recently commissioned a Transport Survey for our workers within the City Centre. With over 600 responses, the survey was a great opportunity to understand how our workers travel to and from work alongside understanding why they use and don't use certain methods of transport.



**80%** said transport is either quite or very important in choosing where they work.



**55%** didn't use a car due to cost.

**67%+** of workers didn't use the bus having felt it wasn't 'convenient' alongside referencing the journey lengths.



**27%+** said convenience and price was how they choose their transport.

## How people get to work.

**50%** Private Car    **30%** Bus    **23%** Walk    **2%** Park & Ride



**53%** didn't want to use the e-scooters due to fear of safety



Which perks do you think would encourage more people to work in the City Centre?

64%+

wanted to see a 'workers discount card for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure in the City Centre'



In additional comments, the majority of 'other' comments related to improvement of transport in general such as better cycle lanes, electric charging points and less traffic. Respondents also stated that they would like to see more improvements in 'making it safer' to get to and from work.

71%+

wanted 'free/discounted park and shuttle bus for workers' combined with 46% wanting 'discounted Park and Ride'.



## BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

The opinion of our levy payers is essential in the delivery of the BID. For each of the last five years, the BID has asked businesses for feedback on our delivery programme and new plans to inform our development. In our last Levy Payer survey, we asked you which current projects you feel have a positive impact on your business and what you would like to see in the next term.

150+ premises responded

The results of this survey have played a huge part in our plans in the new five year term to support attract and retain the best workers in the region.



76%+

felt the Christmas in Colchester project was positive for the City Centre



82%+



felt that the BID was acting as a voice for businesses.

81%+

wanted the BID in Bloom project to continue.

## BUSINESSES WANT TO SEE

More retail shops

Cleaner streets

National marketing campaign to showcase Colchester

Streets looking welcoming

Lower parking fees

More lighting and safer areas

Pavements fixed (trip hazards)

Clean, monitored car parks

Discounted parking

*“The BID team has been providing a combined voice for its members over the past five years and delivering on key strategic projects to help ensure this city is a place for everyone.”*

Sally Shaw MBE  
Director, Firstsite

*“Not only does their dedicated team provide eminent support to local businesses, the Shopfront Improvement Grants, Leisure Recovery Strategy and Safety Support have been invaluable to the survival of a lot of independent shop owners”*

Nick Brown,  
Client Relationship Manager,  
Essex Chamber of Commerce

*“The BID has done an amazing amount of work in the time it has been created adding real value to our City Centre. They aren't afraid to challenge stakeholders putting across the view of the business community so their voices and concerns are truly represented.”*

CLlr Martin Goss,  
Leader of Colchester Liberal Democrats

# 2023-2028

Our ambition is for Colchester to be a City Centre where businesses of all shapes and sizes can develop and thrive in a collaborative, engaging, mixed-use environment, with people and business firmly at its heart; fit for now and fit for the future.

As we move towards our next five year term, we believe in a bold, ambitious, and forward-thinking approach. We will build on the last five years by taking forward our successes whilst also recognising that City Centres are evolving and that we have the ability to shape that evolution ahead of future trends and potential barriers.

There are four key areas that will bring together the BID's activities and the next few pages detail why these themes are important for the future of the City Centre. The themes build on the success of our first term and integrate new elements in response to our ongoing consultations with businesses and partners alongside considering the ever-changing economic, social, and environmental landscape.

## Our Key Themes

**Attracting Visitors -** To drive Colchester forward as the leading place in East Anglia for business, leisure, retail and tourism

**Environment -** To deliver a welcoming, clean, safe and resilient experience for all users of the City Centre

**Business Community -** Maintaining a strong relationship with City Centre businesses, keeping them well informed and ensuring the BID is business-led



# STRATEGY



# FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

## 1 A Memorable City

Delivering exciting, innovative, and experienced-driven projects and events that make our visitors experience memorable. Through enhanced greening of City Centre spaces to large-scale events that bring our residents, workers, and visitors to the heart of Colchester.

## 2 A Forward-Thinking City

We will strive to enable innovation and a forward-thinking approach through well-engaged and researched visions and strategy to be ahead of the curve in place-making changes. Although it is important to manage short-term interventions, we must ensure we are always working towards an exciting future.

## 3 A Safe and Welcoming City

Our guests first impressions are everything. From enabling the brilliant basics to ensuring that every visit is a safe one, we will invest in reducing, challenging, and raising awareness of crime and anti-social behaviour to protect our businesses, visitors and residents through the day and night.

## 4 A Connected City

Through a collaborative approach with our partners and businesses, we will delivering innovative campaigns, activations, and experiences to promote Colchester City Centre. Celebrating our USP's whilst driving Colchester as the leisure, tourism, and employment leader in the region.

## HOW WILL WE DELIVER ON THESE STRATEGIC PILLARS?

# 1 A MEMORABLE CITY

## Experience-Led Events

The BID will grow its calendar of events through the delivery of events both large and small scale events that bring a new layer of experience and excitement throughout the City Centre. From our Soapbox Rally to our Colchester Garden Festival, we will introduce events based on resident, visitor and businesses feedback alongside tying into periodic and seasonal times of the year that create memorable experiences that make you want to tell your friends and family about.



## Annual Christmas in Colchester Programme

We will evolve Colchester's festive offering by innovating experiences for our visitors retail and leisure experiences. Through the development of our Christmas Light Switch-On event to our Late Wednesdays programme, it is essential that we make each visit an exciting and memorable experience for all users. The festive quarter is the most crucial period for our businesses each year and it is imperative that we maximise opportunities to make sure Colchester City Centre is the destination of choice for our core and secondary catchment. Colchester's truly has it all at Christmas.

## Transforming the Public Realm

The BID are passionate about making sure every residents, visitors and workers visit is a positive and memorable visit. We will continue to invest in transforming Colchester's public realm with added greening through our BID in Bloom programme alongside the use of vacant spaces to bring new and innovative uses such as our Street Stories project which has introduced local artwork telling local stories into units using augmented reality to bring a new dimension.

# A FORWARD-THINKING CITY

## Future of Retail

Following its launch in the Summer 2023, the Future of Retail vision for Colchester will focus on its four key themes of:

**Brilliant Basics** – clean, green, safe and bright – well maintained street scenes and public realm which creates a pleasant backdrop for a great visitor experience.

**Repurposing Retail** – Empty space does not need to be empty space; it just needs to repurpose in ways that mirror today’s consumers ‘wants and needs’. Providing alternative uses will support existing retail, bring in new relevant retail and residents for today and the future.

**Environmental Experiences** – Net zero does not have to be zero-fund. Social value, wellbeing and community are no longer secondary matters. Creating a City Centre which Builds Back Greener, understands that sustainability is beginning to play a part in consumer buying decisions and gives people space to breathe.

**Creative Communications** – We know Colchester is a great City, but we need to spread the word. Not only to other residents but to visitors and investors alike. Stand apart and been seen.

## ESG

Through our greening projects we will continue to support environmental improvements to the City Centre through the growth of urban planting projects and increasing biodiversity programmes. Alongside this, we will collaborate with our businesses to deliver innovative adaptations to their business premises and operations to improve their carbon footprint.

The BID will take the lead on improving and enhancing the social aspect of our City Centre – building communities, working with our core catchment, charities and stakeholders to drive pride of place – attracting more local people to use and become advocates of our City Centre.

It is essential that as a City, we use technology and data purposefully to make better decisions and deliver a better quality of life and working environment. We will continue to maintain ourselves as a transparent BID with strong governance whilst supporting our businesses to develop and strengthen their company governance.

*“Their focus on the City Centre highlights the potential of Colchester, strengthening the support system in place for businesses and attracting new business to invest in our ever-growing City Centre.”*

Nancy Foster **Store Director, Fenwick**

*“It’s been five years of the BID team helping businesses like mine in Colchester. I have come to rely on their advice and support when dealing with the inevitable challenges of running a small business on the high street. My success is their success, and I find that comforting.”*

Steve Hurdle **Owner, Best Days Vintage**

## Leisure Strategy and Board

The Leisure Strategy was commissioned as a 5-10-year strategy with accompanying action plan. Therefore, the BID has a wealth of projects to deliver in the coming five years under its action plan from the development of Colchester's first Business Crime Reduction Partnership, nationwide marketing 'This City is' campaign, developing our City Workers Club to entice more workers into our wonderful leisure sector and more.

## Indie Vision 2.0

The BID will commission a review and refresh of the Indie Vision launched in May 2020' following a wide array of project delivery since its launch. To support the independent sector, the review will look into the changing needs and wants of Independent businesses, the public realm interventions that can drive footfall, and strategic ambitions.



*“Strategic development for Colchester City Centre is key to see all sectors thrive. Our Colchester BID have compiled research using industry leaders and Colchester-centric research to provide detailed and ambitious visions for the City Centre within their strategies. Working together and backing the BID is the key to our success as a collective.”*

David Robertson  
Centre Manager, Culver Square



## Cultural Strategy

The BID will continue to support the Colchester Cultural Strategy through linking its work with our Leisure and Retail strategies alongside ensuring that culture is a core component of the City Centre's offer for the future and the present.

## Create Fund and Community Fund

The Create Fund and Community Fund will continue to support local businesses through funding events, projects, and initiatives alongside identifying gaps in the market for up-and-coming projects looking for growth in the City Centre.

# A SAFE AND WELCOMING CITY

## Better Accessibility and Signage

The BID will allocate funding towards a complete refresh of the City Centre's out-dated totem posts and fingerposts that give visitors a poor impression and lack the quality to direct them around the City Centre with ease. We will also look to expand the Lighting the Lanes project to streets including Crouch Street to improve visitors and workers experience during the night-time economy.

## Getting the basics right

The BID will continue its Operation Clean Colchester delivering regular community clean up days to reduce litter and improve grot spots within the City Centre. This will include pavement cleaning, supporting businesses to improve their shopfronts and greening of void spaces. The BID will also look to continue its support delivered through the Shopfront Improvement Grant scheme in 2023. This will enable businesses and landlords to access funding to improve and enhance their business frontages, therefore, improving the visitors experience as well.

## Business Crime Reduction Partnership

The BID will launch Colchester's Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) putting business crime at the forefront of partners objectives. Our businesses are having to battle anti-social behaviour, shoplifting and abuse on a daily basis and the BID will continue to push on partners such as Essex Police and Colchester City Council to invest in reducing these crimes.

BCRP's have been a very successful models across the country to enable partnership working between BIDs, businesses, police and local authorities through the sharing of trends and information to report crime and gain banning orders on certain "troublemakers" using the day time and night time DISC programmes.



*“Colchester is a city of great potential and the ambition of the BID demonstrates the opportunities available in the City Centre. Since the creation of the BID the team have worked with key stakeholders in the City Centre to bring in additional funding for key projects and improvements both in placemaking and strategic ambition.”*

Cllr Julie Young **Leader of Colchester Labour Party**

## Night-Time Economy

The BID will continue to invest in supporting our leisure businesses and its users adapting to the fast changing wants and needs of this sector and those using it. Through regular Purple Flag accreditation, to continued projects such as business training, marketing campaigns and more. Plus a steering group for key stakeholders to support and share best practice with local and national input. Leading Colchester City to be a safe, vibrant experience for all.

## Tackling Vulnerability

The BID will elevate its Tap2Change project to include further support mechanisms for its beneficiaries by driving the message of diverted giving for those with street-based lifestyles. Alongside this, we will continue to invest in tackling vulnerabilities through the growth of the Ask for Angela programme into the retail sector following its success in the Night Time Economy.

## Additional Street Cleaning

Alongside pushing on Essex Highways to improve the current poor quality of our City Centre pavements, the BID will fund regular deep-cleans of paving across the City Centre. We must get the basics right, the cleanliness of the City Centre is something regularly commented on by visitors.



*“We’ve seen a big improvement in the City Centre since the BID was formed – having a team with a can-do attitude and the agility to try new projects and initiatives has brought an injection of energy and creativity to the City Centre.”*

Hana Loftus  
Chair of Creative Colchester



## Demand Responsive Transport

The BID will explore how our workers and visitors are accessing the City Centre to support access to the most convenient and cost-effective way available. We will also continue to mitigate a lack of transport options for visitors and workers in the night time economy following a period of poor taxi service, minimal car park offering and next to no bus services.

# A CONNECTED CITY

## Celebrating Colchester City Centre

The BID will continue its celebration of Colchester City Centre's unique offering through its InColchester brand. From its national 'This City Is' campaigns to its local pride campaigns to our core and secondary catchments. We must celebrate Colchester's USP's whilst being bold in how we are attracting new visitors from across the region to our wonderful City Centre. The BID will continue its core objective of 'talking up Colchester' through positive and proactive media and marketing campaigns encouraging our residents to input into how they perceive the City Centre.

## City Workers Hub

The BID's City Workers Hub will be a hub of information and resources for current and future workers to access a wealth of benefits, perks and information. From upskilling opportunities to mentorship programmes, we will make Colchester City Centre a regional leader in quality of working environments whilst supporting skills brokerage and close link ups with local education organisations such as Colchester Institute, Colchester Sixth Form and University of Essex to ensure their students first choice into employment is the City Centre.



## Showcasing and elevating our businesses

The BID will continue to showcase its incredible businesses with the continuation of our successful Colchester Business Awards programme and awards evening. Alongside this, we will support the development of improved working environments and benefits with added business socialising through our Business Social event. We will continue to grow our BIG Eat Out campaign, funding free lunches for City Centre workers to experience new places to dine. Alongside these business-to-business campaigns, we will develop further programmes that's showcase the breadth of quality our businesses have to offer and keeping spend local through our Colchester Gift Card programme.

## Acting as a voice of Colchester City Centre businesses

The BID has ensured that over its first five years it has been involved in all key meetings about the City Centre to ensure our businesses voices are heard. We will continue to drive the voices of our business community into each and every meeting with local authorities to ensure that business operations are a focus and priority in decision making. It is essential that the businesses within the City Centre have a single voice, contributing to positive change for the City Centre. The BID will ensure that business operations are a priority consideration for local authorities when developing plans for large scale road and public realm changes to ensure our businesses are able to continue their operations with minimal disruption. We will ensure a strong communication voice and support businesses to be involved at all levels of consultation. The City Centre will evolve considerably in the coming 2-3 years through large scale developments and it is essential that businesses voices are the first and most important input.





*“The BID provides our business with a great support system for advertising events and promotions in-store. We’ve made some great connections with other shop Managers in the town centre through regular Retail Forums and Networking Events hosted by the BID. As a retail manager it’s hugely beneficial to our business to receive updates and have input into the decisions made about changes in our City.”*

Charlie Whiting Trainee Manager, Lush

## Attracting investment and talent

Ensuring the BID is at the forefront of supporting our businesses is essential to the future of the City Centre. However, it is also essential that we are consistently marketing Colchester to potential investors and organisations that are not currently in Colchester. The BID will develop an Inward Investment Pack for both enquiring businesses but also to approach organisations that we feel would work well in the City Centre. Through partnership working with local commercial agents and meeting with Head of Properties at large-scale organisations to show Colchester’s exciting offering and future.

## InColchester

The BID will continue in its investment in the InColchester website to match the fast-evolving digital world. Surpassing over 250,000 annual visitors, the InColchester website is a nationwide leader in City Centre websites. We will invest in the development of a Shared Box Office for visitors to plan the entirety of their visit to Colchester in one place. From the booking of their hotels, to the purchasing of their theatre tickets, itinerary building to journey planning, the website will be the one-stop shop to show off Colchester City Centres fantastic offering.

## Street Ambassadors

The BID’s Street Ambassadors are vital to ensuring our businesses have day-to-day engagement and a voice to raise concerns or opportunities to our fantastic Street Ambassadors. Delivering over 450 hours of patrol and reporting each month, our Street Ambassadors will continue to support businesses to feed in key trends and topics for support the BID’s future planning.

# THE LEVY

Governance, Budget And Accounts



The BID levy is a small percentage of a businesses' rateable value. The levy is collected on top of the existing Business Rates bill.

Variables To Income	Total
Headline BID Levy Rate	1.75%
Levy Rate for Charities	1.5%
Levy Rate for Shopping Centres	1.5%
Total Rateable Value	£28,007,750
Levy Rate Inflation	2%
Additional Income	To be Sourced
Levy Cap	No Cap
Hereditaments	Circa 450
Threshold Above Which Levy Applies	£14,999

## The Levy Rules

1. The levy will apply to all persons or organisations liable to pay the non-domestic rates for eligible hereditaments located within the BID area
2. The levy rate to be paid by each property or hereditament is to be calculated as 1.75% of its rateable value as at the 'chargeable day' (notionally 1st October each year)
3. All properties of hereditaments with a rateable value of £14,999 or more will be eligible for a payment of the levy.
4. The number of properties or hereditaments liable for the levy is circa 450.
5. From 2024 onwards, the levy rate will be increased by the fixed rate of 2% per annum.
6. The levy will be charged annually in advance for each chargeable period (October to September each year), starting in October 2023. No refunds will be made.
7. The owners of untenanted properties or hereditaments will be liable for the levy.
8. Occupiers within Shopping Centres that are subject to a service charge will pay 1.5% of their rateable value.
9. Charitable organisations that are subject to relief of their business rates liability will pay a levy of 1.5% of their rateable value.
10. The BID levy must be paid by any new ratepayer occupying an existing eligible non-domestic rateable property within the BID area up until the end of the five-year term, even if they did not vote in the ballot.
11. Both Colchester Sixth Form College and Colchester Institute are exempt from paying the levy
12. The licensing authority currently does not have a policy to introduce a Late-Night Levy during the term of the BID.
13. Colchester Borough Council will be responsible for collection of the levy. The collection charge will be £13,300 in year one, followed by £13,300 per annum for the remaining four years of the BID. This equates to a collection charge of £29.55 per hereditament in year one based on 450 hereditaments and is approximately 2% of the anticipated billed levy.



	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
BID Levy Income	£452,024	£461,065	£470,286	£479,692	£489,286	£2,352,352
Additional Income*	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£500,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£552,024</b>	<b>£561,065</b>	<b>£570,286</b>	<b>£579,692</b>	<b>£589,286</b>	<b>£2,852,352</b>

## Themes

A Memorable City	£110,405	£112,213	£114,057	£115,938	£117,857	£570,470
A Forward-Thinking City	£82,804	£84,160	£85,543	£86,954	£88,393	£427,853
A Safe & Welcoming City	£93,844	£95,381	£96,949	£98,548	£100,179	£484,900
A Connected City	£110,405	£112,213	£114,057	£115,938	£117,857	£570,470
Operating Costs	£110,405	£112,213	£114,057	£115,938	£117,857	£570,470
Levy Collection Costs	£13,300	£13,300	£13,300	£13,300	£13,300	£66,500
Contingency	£30,862	£31,585	£32,323	£33,075	£33,843	£161,688
<b>Total</b>	<b>£552,024</b>	<b>£561,065</b>	<b>£570,286</b>	<b>£579,692</b>	<b>£589,286</b>	<b>£2,852,352</b>

\* forecasted

## Governance, Accountability and Transparency

- The BID recognises the importance of accountability and transparency within its governance arrangements. It has recently received full accreditation from British BIDs, an award in respect of internal quality management systems within its first term.
- The number of Directors for the BID Company (the Board - maximum 12) will include representation from all business sectors to ensure inclusion. This may include some non-levy payers, although always in a minority.
- The Board's current Chair will continue into the new BID term. Any changes to the BID Chair will be voted on by the BID Board Directors.
- The Proposer of the new BID and the BID Body is Our Colchester Limited, a not-for-profit organisation, limited by guarantee.
- The Billing Authority will be Colchester City Council who will be responsible for the issue of bills and collection & enforcement of BID levy payments.
- The BID will file annual accounts compiled by independent accountants with Companies House. The accounts will be available to all levy payers. An annual report on activities, including finances, will be published. An Annual Meeting for levy payers will be held. The BID will issue a statement every year to levy payers.
- An Operating Agreement has been agreed with Colchester City Council. A copy can be found at [www.ourcolchester.co.uk](http://www.ourcolchester.co.uk)
- Notification of the intention to hold a ballot was sent to the Secretary of State on 6th March 2023
- The BID terms will commence on 1st October 2023 and run for a five year period until September 2028.
- The Board shall have the ability to vary service delivery and expenditure allocation according to the changing demands of levy payers. However, any change to the BID boundary or to the levy rate proposals would require an alteration ballot.

## Finances

- A cautious approach has been adopted to providing the indicative budget for the BID term.
- A levy collection rate of 97% has been assumed and this reflects national average.
- The average annual levy available to be spent by the BID for the term is approx. £470k assuming 97% collection rate.
- Annual surpluses act as a contingency provision on expenditure, and together with the availability of reserves, provide for an anticipated surplus of 5% of average annual expenditure by the end of the first term.
- Operating costs of the BID Company are estimated as 20% of total expenditure.

# VOTE

## OUR COLCHESTER

*A BID to make new history*

### Ballot Period : 23rd June to 20th July

Colchester City Council will send those responsible for eligible hereditaments to be subject to the BID, a ballot paper prior to 23rd June 2023.

Each property or hereditament subject to the BID will be entitled to one vote in the ballot (a 28-day postal ballot) which will commence on 23rd June and close at 5pm on 20th July

2023. Ballot papers received after 5pm on that day will not be counted.

The result of the ballot will be announced as soon as practically possible after it closes.

In order for the proposal to be successful at ballot, the result will need to meet, as a minimum, two independent criteria which are:  
(a) of those ballot returned by the close, those voting in favour of the

proposal must exceed those voting against it, and  
(b) of those ballot papers returned by the close, the total rateable value of those properties or hereditaments which vote in favour, must exceed the total of those voting against.

If successful at ballot, the new BID will commence delivery of services on 1st October 2023 and will continue for a period of five years to end 30th September 2028.

### HOW TO SAY YES

- 1 You will receive one ballot paper for each property that you are eligible to vote for by post. If you do not receive your ballot paper, please email [hello@ourcolchester.co.uk](mailto:hello@ourcolchester.co.uk)
- 2 Please check that each ballot paper received has its own return envelope.
- 3 Complete the ballot paper by putting a cross (X) beside your choice to retain the Our Colchester BID for a further five years or not.
- 4 Write your name and job title and sign the ballot paper
- 5 Each ballot paper must be returned in its own separate envelope
- 6 Return your completed ballot paper/s by post in the pre-paid envelope or within one of the City Centre ballot boxes.
- 7 If you have any questions, please contact [hello@ourcolchester.co.uk](mailto:hello@ourcolchester.co.uk) or call 07490998820.