

CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on 15 July 2026 at 7.12pm

PRESENT:

The Deputy Mayor, J Frascona

Councillors C Adutwim, H Ayres, G Bonnett, D Clark, H Clark, A Davidson, C Davidson, S Davis, S Dobson, N Dudley, D Eley, K Franks, J Frascona, I Fuller, S Goldman, S Hall, J Hawkins, R Hyland, B Knight, J Jeapes, A John, J Lardge, R Lee, S Manley, L Mascot, B. Massey, R Moore, O'Brien, S Rajesh, S Robinson, E Sampson, S. Shah, T Sherlock, J Sosin, A Sosin, M Steel, S Sullivan, M Taylor, A Thompson, A Thorpe-Apps, N Walsh and S Young

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Armstrong, Canning, Chambers, P Clark, Davey, Deakin, Foster, Pappa, Potter, Raven, Scott, Sismey, Tron, Whitehead and Wilson.

2. Mayors Announcements

The Deputy Mayor noted the recent sad passing of former Councillor Laurie Boyall who had been a Councillor between 1973 and 1983 and that thoughts were with their family and friends.

The Deputy Mayor informed the Council that the Mayoralty had attended a total of 58 engagements since the start of their term of office and they highlighted upcoming events for their chosen charity, Springfield Furniture Bank, including a Prosecco and Strawberries event at the Hive on 19th July and an afternoon tea at Keene Homes on 9th August.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded to declare at the appropriate time, any interests in the business on the meeting's agenda. None were made.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2026 were confirmed as a correct record.

5. Public Questions

[Two public questions had been submitted which can be viewed via this link](#). The first question raised concerns about an alleged knife-related incident in May 2026 and what actions the Council were taking to tackle and reduce knife crime, what support, safeguarding and intervention measures were available, escalation routes for ongoing complaints about anti-social behaviour and the Council's work alongside housing providers, Essex Police and youth services when allegations involved individuals reportedly residing temporarily within local social housing areas.

In response the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing stated they could not discuss the particulars of the case raised, but that the Council and Essex Police were not aware of high levels of anti-social behaviour in the area outlined. They also stated that knife crime and serious youth antisocial behaviour was taken seriously by the Council, with investments in a bespoke community safety partnership hub which was thriving and enabled the support of young people who were at risk, work via the Council's Community Safety Team and additional funding for more policing at peak times to patrol the City Centre and surrounding parks, on top of existing interventions like 24/7 CCTV, the Open Road SOS bus and night marshals. The Cabinet Member also highlighted that antisocial behaviour could be reported via community.safety@chelmsford.gov.uk or to the Essex Police website or by phoning 101, but that the Council could only take action if the unacceptable behaviour was actually reported, to which also the ASB Case Review process was mentioned. The Cabinet Member also stated that the Council continued to work closely with a number of housing providers to tackle antisocial behaviour, but that the placement of young persons in the community was a social care function under Essex County Council's responsibility, but work would of course continue with the County Council and housing providers should support be required with individual cases.

The second question raised concerns about observations made at Essex Pride, and what discussions the Council had held with organisers regarding adult-themed costumes, role play and fetish related displays at a public event with children present, safeguarding or content expectations for facilitated or supported events in public spaces and the balancing of resources given the significant challenges facing young people in Chelmsford.

In response the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure stated that the event was an independent event organised by Essex Pride and the Council's role was to support the safe and appropriate use of public spaces, working with organisers where needed on event management, safety, accessibility and safeguarding, highlighting that the Council actively supported the values of equality, diversity and inclusion that Pride represents. The Cabinet Member stated that event organisers were encouraged to follow the Purple Guide in respect of health and safety and welfare at outdoor events, as set out in the Council's Outdoor Events Policy in Parks and Green Spaces. It was also noted that officers had engaged with event organisers through the normal planning process, including discussions on licensing, stewarding, security, accessibility and safeguarding, but that the Council did not pre-approve individual attendees' clothing choices, provided they complied with the law and event rules and that organisers were responsible for managing the event and responding to concerns on the day. The Council were informed that safeguarding was of course taken

seriously, but that ultimately the event organiser was responsible for ensuring adequate safeguarding controls were in place and managed. The Council also heard that no issues had been raised by other families attending, in fact the opposite with praise for the event being safe, welcoming and an inclusive environment for everyone.

The Cabinet Member also highlighted commitment to supporting community events as well as supporting children and young people, with Pride giving LGBTQ+ young people in Chelmsford an event that supported them directly, by giving them the space to express themselves freely. The Council were informed that as with all events officers would continue to work with organisers to ensure appropriate arrangements were in place and to consider any constructive feedback as part of future planning, and that any specific concerns should be raised directly with Essex Pride. The Cabinet Member also highlighted that the event had been a wonderful celebration of equality, inclusion and that the Council continued to fully support diversity and believed that there was an important place for events such as Essex Pride in the wonderful and diverse city of Chelmsford.

6. Cabinet Question Time

The following questions from Councillors were put to members of the Cabinet:

Question from Councillor H Clark to the Deputy Cabinet Member for Economy and Sustainable Transport

Could the appropriate Cabinet member tell us about the recent Skills Fest, including how many people attended, and will it be going ahead next year?

In response to the question the Deputy Cabinet Member stated that the event had been a great success with 1,100 Year 8 children attending for a range of fun and hands-on activities delivered by over 100 local businesses at ARU Writtle. It was also noted that this had been the fifth event which continued to grow year on year, colleagues from Brentwood and Maldon had also attended ahead of LGR and planning had already begun for the 2027 event.

Question from Councillor Thorpe-Apps to the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

Chelmsford City Council has rightly invested considerable time and resources in initiatives such as the Women's Safety Charter, launched in 2022, to improve safety and wellbeing for women across the district.

With International Men's Day approaching in November, could the Cabinet Member outline what specific initiatives the Council is undertaking to address issues that disproportionately affect men in Chelmsford, particularly in relation to mental health, suicide prevention, social isolation, and support for male victims of domestic abuse?

In particular, could the Cabinet Member advise:

What events or initiatives, if any, are planned to mark International Men's Day?

What Council-funded programmes specifically support men's mental health and wellbeing beyond the existing "On Your Team" initiative?

Whether the Council has any plans to develop a strategy or action plan focused on men's health and wellbeing, comparable to its Women's Safety Charter or other gender-specific initiatives?

In response to the question the Cabinet Member stated that the Council delivered a range of projects and initiatives for all individuals, including men, with some programmes specific to men. They highlighted the On Your Team initiative, previous funding for the Over 50's Black Men's Forum, which had led to the certification of community members as Mental Health First Responders and the Strengthening Communities Grant Programme administered by Chelmsford CVS on the Council's behalf. The Cabinet Member also highlighted previous funding for the Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse which had supported both women and men. The Cabinet Member also covered other activities from the Chelmsford Sport and Wellbeing Team, work with the Chelmsford CVS and with Kinder Essex. The Cabinet Member reiterated the importance of the Women's Safety Charter and the fact that Women and girls should have the absolute right to feel safe wherever they are and that the Charter was a statement from the Council and partners that behaviours that made women feel unsafe in our City at any time of the day or night would not be tolerated. They also stated that everybody has a role to play in creating and sustaining a respectful and inclusive culture for all and that Chelmsford was recognised as a progressive place, championing women's safety throughout the City.

Cllr Thorpe-Apps followed up by noting that there was not a specific offering for men within the overall framework and with higher male suicide rates, should there not be dedicated strategy for men as well. In response the Cabinet Member stated that, work would continue closely with partners and that the Council's website highlighted lots of places where anybody could seek mental health support and Men's mental health was not being ignored by the Council.

Question from Councillor A Davidson to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Many of my residents with young families will find the summer holidays difficult given cost-of-living pressures. St Andrews ward is the most deprived ward in Chelmsford. So, will the relevant Cabinet Member please let me know what free activities are planned for children during the summer holidays, including for those families who can't afford to run a car?

In response the Cabinet Member stated that there was a wide range of free activities available right across Chelmsford this summer, many being delivered locally and accessible without the need for a car. They highlighted the Play in the Park programme, Essex ActivAte programme and free cultural opportunities including Iron Age Day at the Museum of Chelmsford. The Cabinet Member also highlighted the Summer Reading Challenge, initiatives such as SPARK! And detailed that there was a substantial programme of free activity available this summer, with opportunities available across Chelmsford. The Cabinet Member stated that there was always

more that could be done though and that work would continue with voluntary organisations, community groups, cultural partners and funders to expand opportunities and help remove financial barriers to participation, particularly for families who may otherwise be unable to take part.

7. Proposed changes to the Constitution

The Council were asked to approve the proposed changes to the constitution that had previously been presented at Constitution Working Group, Governance Committee and Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the proposed changes to the constitution be approved.

(7.42pm to 7.42pm)

8. Treasury Outturn 2025–26

The Council were presented with the Treasury Management Outturn Report for the financial year ending 31 March 2026.

RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Treasury Management and Investment Sub-Committee and Cabinet in relation to the Treasury Management outturn report be approved.

(7.43pm to 7.44pm)

9. Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee presented the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee for 2025/26. The report provided an overview of the committee's responsibilities, membership, and the work undertaken during the year. It was intended to demonstrate the committee's contribution to the council's governance framework. Officers and committee members were thanked for their support over the previous year.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee 2025/26 be approved for publication.

(7.44pm to 7.46pm)

10. Annual Report of the Governance Committee

The annual report of the Governance Committee 2025/26 was submitted for information. The Chair of the Governance Committee shared that, of the nine complaints received during the year, one required further investigation. Thanks were expressed to the Monitoring Officer and the council's Independent Persons for their work in handling complaints and supporting the committee's functions.

RESOLVED that the Governance Committee's Annual Report for 2025/26 be approved for publication.

(7.46pm to 7.47pm)

11. Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the activity of the scrutiny function of the Council for 2025/26 was submitted for information. The report outlined the Committee's main areas of work over the past year, which had included updates from Cabinet Members, and performance reviews of individual services. The Committee had also received the annual presentation on the work of Essex Police and the Safer Chelmsford Partnership. Officers were thanked for their support throughout the year.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2025-26 be approved for publication.

(7.48pm to 7.49pm)

12. Report from the Governance Committee – Proposed censure of City Councillor

The Council received a report from the Governance Committee, that proposed a censure of Cllr P Clark, following the hearing on 11th March 2026 that had found them in breach of the Code of Conduct, through disrespectful behaviour to an officer and the failure to co-operate with the Code of Conduct investigation. The Council were informed of the important role in public life held by Councillors and the requirement for elected representatives to be held to a high standard of conduct, with professional relationships being maintained with officers.

The Council were informed by the Chair of the Governance Committee at the time of the investigation, that it was very disappointing to have to propose the motion, but that the behaviour of Cllr P Clark had been shocking, with their conduct going far beyond reasonable challenge and that officers did not deserve to be spoken to in the way that they had been by Cllr P Clark. They also apologised to officers on behalf of Councillors and highlighted that much better was expected from Councillors, regardless of political affiliations. A member of the opposition on the Governance Committee, seconded the motion and highlighted the extensive access to officers that Councillors had at the Council, but that it was the responsibility of Councillors to respect the integrity and professionalism of officers. They also highlighted that all Councillors had signed up to the Code of Conduct and that they hoped the recognition of the behaviour and censure would reassure officers that this had not been acceptable.

RESOLVED that Councillor Paul Clark be formally censured by the Council in relation to the findings of the Governance Committee.

(7.49pm to 7.57pm)

13. Community Governance Review

The Council received a report updating them in relation to the Community Governance Review and City Status. The report provided the results of the consultation, an update in relation to City Status and a proposal that no further action should be taken in relation to the CGR and to end the review process. It was noted that the Council had been advised that City Status could not be transferred to a Parish Council, leaving charter trustees as an option but that if an area was fully parished charter trustees would not be available. It was therefore noted that if the Council were to proceed with parishing the unparished area, City Status would be lost upon re-organisation in 2028, as a result the proposal was to take no further action and end the CGR process.

RESOLVED that;

1. the outcome of the initial formal consultation be noted.
2. Council notes the position in relation to City Status.
3. Council agreed that no changes be made in relation to community governance and that the community governance review be concluded at this stage.

(7.58pm to 8.03pm)

14. Notice of Motion

A notice of motion was presented to the Council by Cllr Jeapes and seconded by Cllr Thorpe-Apps, regarding free summer holidays parking at Hylands Park.

Those speaking against the motion raised concerns including that the proposal had not been properly thought through, would lead to parking issues elsewhere at the park's busiest time, those who had already paid for annual season tickets, that visitors from outside of Chelmsford benefiting when the charge had been designed to make non residents contribute and that the motion was being debated three days before its proposed introduction, leaving it completely unworkable for officers. The Council also heard that the Cabinet Member for Finance invited proposals every year from the opposition before the setting of the budget, but no proposals ever came forward and the opposition had in fact voted for the budget proposed for 2026/27 which included the parking charges. The Council also heard that those on Council Tax Support could park for free already, as could blue badge holders. The Council also heard views that the motion had been designed to generate headlines in the local press, that all parks in Chelmsford were free to visit and that all 19 had green flag awards.

Those speaking for the motion stated that it had been designed to give residents an opportunity to enjoy the park during the summer holidays, that previous petitions on the parking charges had been ignored and that it would be greatly beneficial for residents mental health which should be put above finances. The Council also heard that the proposal was practical and could have been easily implemented, that there were already parking issues nearby as a result of the charges and that many residents simply no longer visited the park due to the charges. The Council heard that the motion had not been a political proposal, instead a gesture to residents and that a Traffic Regulation Order charging for parking, could be simply removed by the Council if they

had decided to do so. The Council also heard that the proposal could be afforded financially and that as stated by the administration the Council's finances were in better shape than when the charge had been introduced.

A recorded vote was requested by more than ten Councillors, as detailed below:

For the motion: Cllrs Bonnett, Davis, Dobson, Jeapes, John, Knight, Massey, O'Brien, Shah, Steel, Sullivan, Taylor and Thorpe-Apps *(13 votes)*

Against the motion: Cllrs Adutwim, Ayres, D. Clark, H. Clark, A. Davidson, C. Davidson, Dudley, Eley, Fuller, Goldman, Hall, Hawkins, Lardge, Lee, Manley, Mascot, Moore, Rajesh, Robinson, Sampson, Sherlock, A. Sosin, J. Sosin, Thompson, Walsh and Young *(27 votes)*

Abstained: Cllrs Frasca and Hyland *(2 votes)*

RESOLVED that the motion was not approved.

(8.04pm to 8.34pm)

The meeting closed at 8:34pm

Mayor