MINUTES OF

CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL CABINET

on 14 July 2026 at 7pm

Present:

Cabinet Members

Councillor S Robinson, Leader of the Council (Chair)
Councillor J Lardge, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure
Councillor C Davidson, Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor N Dudley, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Councillor K Franks, Cabinet Member for a Fairer Chelmsford
Councillor J Hawkins, Cabinet Member for a Connected Chelmsford
Councillor R Lee, Cabinet Member for Planning and Place-Shaping
Councillor R Moore, Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford

Cabinet Deputies

Councillor S Goldman, Deputy Cabinet Member for Cleaner Communities
Councillor T Sherlock, Deputy Cabinet Member for Economy and Sustainable Transport

Opposition Spokespersons

Councillors, G. Bonnett, S. Dobson, J. Jeapes, M. Steel, S. Sullivan, A. Thorpe-Apps and R. Whitehead

Also present: Councillors H. Clark, J. Potter, S. Shah and A. Sosin

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P. Clark, Hyland, Raven and Wilson

2. Declarations of Interest

Members of the Cabinet were reminded to declare at the appropriate time any interests in any of the items of business on the meeting's agenda.

None were raised.

3. Minutes and Decisions Called-in

The minutes of the meeting on 21 May 2026 were confirmed as a correct record. No decisions had been called in.

4. Public Questions

One public question had been submitted for the meeting, which can be viewed via this link. The Cabinet Member agreed to send a written response to the member of the public.

5. Members' Questions

Two questions were asked at this point of the meeting by Cllr Shah. The first question asked about a social media post from Chelmsford For You of an artist mural in the window of a store in the City Centre, that had been reposted by the Council's Communication's team and had caused upset to some who had seen the image. In response the Leader of the Council stated that, the Council had apologised to the resident who wrote in with concerns, the image had not been funded or commissioned by the Council and as soon as the Council's attention was drawn to the issue the post had been removed. It was noted that the team would reflect on different perspectives moving forward, especially when resharing posts from other organisations.

The second question from Cllr Shah, asked about the removal of the permit for taxi drivers to operate at Beaulieu Station. They asked why concerns had not been listened to when raised at earlier points and what assurances could be given, that the administration would respond to issues quicker in the future. In response, the Leader of the Council stated that initially it was not clear how busy the station would be and it had always been intended to have a six month review of operations and customer levels etc. The Cabinet heard that there had been a number of factors in play when deciding how many permits to issue and once it became apparent that the scheme was not operating as hoped, the evidence was reviewed and the permit requirement was removed accordingly.

6.1 Proposed Changes to the Constitution (Leader)

Declarations of interest:

None.

Summary:

The Cabinet were asked to consider proposed changes to the Constitution on the Employee Code of Conduct and Mayoral Rules, which had been recommended by the Constitutional Working Group and Governance Committee.

Options:

1. To recommend to Council that the changes be made.
2. To not recommend to Council that the changes are made.

Preferred option and reasons:

The preferred option was to recommend the changes to Council as recommended by the Constitutional Working Group and Governance Committee.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that the changes be made.

(7.09pm to 7.10pm)

7.1 South Woodham Ferrers Leisure Centre Improvements (Culture and Leisure)

Declarations of interest:

None.

Summary:

The Cabinet considered a report which informed them that initial design feasibility work had explored the potential to enhance fitness facilities at SWFLC and the report sought to confirm the next steps for the proposed scheme.

Options:

1. Continue proceeding with the proposed scheme up to tender stage
2. Cease the project
3. Put the project on hold

Preferred option and reasons:

The preferred option was to continue proceeding with the proposed scheme up to tender stage to ensure greater cost certainty, ahead of delivering the scheme and its associated financial, health and community benefits.

Discussion:

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure stated that there was a clear need for an improved facility for the growing community in South Woodham Ferrers and that the centre currently operated with a deficit. It was noted that the fitness offer was constrained by the limited size and hours, but that the proposals would provide improved community access, whilst protecting the school gym space on site. It was noted that a stronger fitness offer would improve the centre's long-term feasibility and financial sustainability, whilst ensuring a flexible accommodation space with William De Ferrers school. The Cabinet heard that the proposals were a result of a good partnership with the school to ensure better use of existing assets and to make good use of ringfenced CIL for South Woodham Ferrers. The Cabinet were also informed that some reserves would be used to progress the scheme to tender stage and to provide greater certainty and a detailed business case for Cabinet to consider in the future.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the proposals included moving the entrance door to assist with safeguarding issues, that the school floor space would remain the same and that the project had been on a rolling programme of planned improvement works for a while.

RESOLVED that;

1. Further feasibility funding of approx £52,000 to proceed with the proposed scheme up to tender stage (RIBA 4) including tender analysis be approved.

2. The use of reserves be considered to fund the project on the basis that it will be re-couped on receipt of the ringfenced CIL from South Woodham Ferrers, the project which improves the sports centre and secondary school was an entirely appropriate use and meets the definition of infrastructure.
3. Should the scheme become unaffordable or unworkable from a community perspective, it will be aborted with Cabinet informed accordingly.

(7.11pm to 7.15pm)

8.1 Treasury Management Outturn Report 2025/26 (Finance)

Declarations of interest:

None.

Summary:

The Cabinet received a report detailing Chelmsford City Council's treasury management activities over the financial year 2025/26, in line with statutory requirements and the CIPFA Code of Practice.

The report was factual and no options were presented.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2025/26 be recommended to Full Council.

(7.16pm to 7.17pm)

9.1 Adoption of the Revised Essex Coast Recreational disturbance and Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) (Planning and Place-Shaping)

Declarations of interest:

None.

Summary:

The Cabinet were asked to consider the revised Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) 2026 and associated tariff. The Cabinet's approval was also sought, to revoke the existing RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which no longer aligned with the revised RAMS and to replace it with a Technical Advice Note (TAN).

Options:

1. Adopt the revised Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS 2026) and the associated tariff, and to revoke the existing RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and replace it with a Technical Advice Note (TAN)
2. Not adopt the revised Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS 2026) and the associated tariff, and to revoke the existing RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and replace it with a Technical Advice Note (TAN).

Preferred option and reasons:

The preferred option was the first option, as it would ensure the council continues to meet its legal duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) by providing a robust, evidence-led and legally compliant framework to mitigate the impacts of residential development on internationally protected habitats. The updated tariff will ensure that the full cost of mitigation is fairly and proportionately secured for the lifetime of the development. Revoking the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and replacing it with a Technical Advice Note will provide up-to-date guidance on the revised RAMS implementation and reflect legislative changes which remove the ability to prepare new SPDs.

Discussion:

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Place-Shaping stated that the proposals had been recommended for approval by the Policy Board and that RAMS was realistically the easiest option for mitigation for both Local Planning Authorities and Housing Developers. They also stated that the increase in tariff appeared high, but had been pushed by Natural England for in perpetuity schemes and that it was around the same as other areas.

RESOLVED that;

1. the revised Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) 2026 and associated tariff as set out in Appendix 1 be adopted.

2. the implementation of a revised Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) 2026 tariff of £476 per net additional dwelling (or equivalent qualifying development and index linked), to take effect from 1 August 2026 be approved.

3. the adopted Essex Coast RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), noting that its content is no longer fully aligned with the revised Strategy, evidence base and tariff be revoked.

4. the Essex Coast RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be replaced with an Essex Coast RAMS Technical Advice Note (TAN) and that the Assistant Director – Planning and Place Shaping be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Place Shaping, to finalise and publish the TAN for use alongside the revised Essex Coast RAMS Strategy 2026.

(7.17pm to 7.18pm)

10. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

11. Reports to Council

Items 6.1 and 8.1 were subject of recommendations to Full Council.

Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for item 12.1 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A to the Act (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the authority holding that information).

12.1 Proposed development of a new cemetery and crematorium (Greener Chelmsford)

Declarations of interest:

None.

Summary:

The Cabinet were provided with an update on the progress made concerning the proposed development of a new cemetery and crematorium and were asked to authorise the Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure and Open Spaces to make the necessary arrangements to submit a planning application and source a potential contractor(s), to build the new facilities subject to an appropriate procurement process and further approvals.

Options:

1. To authorise the submission of a planning application and undertake further work to finalise a full business case for a new cemetery and crematorium. On completion of the final business case, a further report is expected to be made to Cabinet and Council to seek approval of necessary budgets to complete the scheme.

2. To agree not to submit a planning application in which case the project development will be suspended.

Preferred option and reasons:

Option 1 was preferred as otherwise the project cannot proceed to the next stage, the consequence of which is that, in time, the Council would not be able to provide burial and cremation services that meet local needs. The financial implications of option 2 would be a net ongoing annual financial loss of circa £600k per annum. Option 1 requires capital investment, and the final business case was expected to demonstrate that it provides a more sustainable and cost-effective way of maintaining local burial and cremation provision. This is supported by initial financial modelling set out in the report.

Discussion:

The Cabinet were informed that this had been a long running project and that this represented the next step towards a new cemetery and crematorium. It was noted that the proposals were designed to give greater certainty on the project and to test any proposals before any final decision by the Cabinet and Full Council. The Cabinet were informed that various alternatives had been explored, but the proposed site represented the best option and that it would provide resilience and efficiency and the continuity of service over a much longer term than the existing site. The Cabinet also heard that the project aligned with net zero ambitions, via the use of modern technologies and was the most sustainable long term option available to the Council. The Cabinet were reminded that approval of the recommendations would allow the project to progress, but a detailed business case needed to be developed and considered before any final decisions could be made at Cabinet and by Full Council.

In response to points raised, it was noted that as part of the planning application process, all planning concerns would be looked at and the consultation phase of the planning application would allow concerns to be raised, in terms of minimising impact of the site. It was also noted that the future business case would consider other nearby sites in relation to Local Government Reorganisation and that the needs assessment would set out why the site was required in detail as part of the planning application.

RESOLVED that;

1. The Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure and Open Spaces be authorised to submit a planning application for the development of a new cemetery and crematorium. The Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure and Open Spaces be authorised to make arrangements for the approach to tender and procurement of the new facilities, as set out in the report, on the basis that no contract for the supply of cremator equipment or wider construction will be entered into without further Council approval.

2. A further sum of £415k be approved to the existing capital budget to allow design works and a procurement exercise to be completed so that a fully costed scheme and project justification can be considered by the Council before making a decision to implement the scheme.

3. The land acquisition budget be increased by £200k to allow for legal costs, stamp duty and capped inflation.

(7.19pm to 7.34pm)

The meeting closed at 7.34pm

Chair