

Governance Committee Agenda



15 October 2025

Membership

Councillor K. Franks (Chair)

and Councillors

H. Ayres, I. Fuller, B. Massey, M. Steel, A. Thompson and
S. Young

Parish Council Representatives

Councillor K. Bentley (South Woodham Ferrers Town Council)
Councillor K. Golla (Chelmsford Garden Community Council)
Councillor P. Jackson (Great Waltham Parish Council)

Local people are welcome to attend this meeting, where your elected Councillors take decisions affecting YOU and your City. There is also an opportunity to ask your Councillors questions or make a statement. These have to be submitted in advance and details are on the agenda page. If you would like to find out more, please telephone the Democracy Team on (01245) 606480 or email committees@chelmsford.gov.uk

Governance Committee

15 October 2025

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes

To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025.

3. Declaration of Interests

All Members are reminded that they must disclose any interests they know they have in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they must do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they become aware of the interest. If the interest is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they are also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting.

4. Public Question Time

Any member of the public may ask a question or make a statement at this point in the meeting. Each person has two minutes and a maximum of 15 minutes is allotted to public questions/statements, which must be about matters for which the Committee is responsible.

The Chair may disallow a question if it is offensive, substantially the same as another question or requires disclosure of exempt or confidential information. If the question cannot be answered at the meeting a written response will be provided after the meeting.

Any member of the public who wishes to submit a question or statement to this meeting should email it to committees@chelmsford.gov.uk 24 hours before the start time of the meeting. All valid questions and statements will be published with the agenda on the website at least six hours before the start time and will be responded to at the meeting. Those who have submitted a valid question or statement will be entitled to put it in person at the meeting, provided they have indicated that they wish to do so and have submitted an email address to which an invitation to join the meeting and participate in it can be sent.

5. Chair's Announcements

6. Monitoring Officer Report

7. Information Governance/Annual SIRO Update

8. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report and Complaint Handling Code update report

9. Senior Responsible Officer's report in relation to the Council's RIPA arrangements

10. Work Programme

11. Urgent Business

To consider any other matter which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

11 June 2025 at 7.15pm

Present:

Councillor K. Franks (Chair)

Councillors H. Ayres, I. Fuller, R. Lee, M. Steel and A. Thompson

Also in attendance –

Parish Councillor K. Golla

Independent Person –

Mr P Jeremiah

Ms P Mills

Ms C Gosling

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillors K Bentley and P Jackson, and Councillor S Young. Cllr R Lee substituting for Cllr S Young.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

All Members were reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests or other registerable interests where appropriate in any items of business on the meeting's agenda, none were made.

4. Public Question Time

No questions or statements were received from members of the public.

5. Chair's Announcements

No Announcements were received.

6. Monitoring Officer Report

The Monitoring Officer presented an update on standards complaints and investigations for the period of January 2025 to June 2025.

The Committee was advised that since publication of the agenda one additional complaint had been received. It was shared that this complaint was in the early stages and would be added to the report to the next Governance Committee.

The two newly elected Councillors had completed their register of interest forms.

In response to questions the Committee was advised that there was no apparent pattern in the number of complaints received compared to previous years and that the amount of complaints varies from year to year. In comparison to other local authorities, it was shared that Chelmsford had a smaller amount of parish councils compared to other areas and the Monitoring Officer was more concerned with the substance of complaints rather than the amount received. It was suggested that training on the complaints procedure was being considered but was likely to be delayed due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

RESOLVED that the update be noted and the standards enquiries and investigations statistics for the period of January-June 2025 be published online.

(7.15pm to 7.22pm)

7. Proposed Constitution Changes

The committee received a report detailing the recommendations for proposed changes to the constitution.

The committee heard that there were a large number of changes to the constitution proposed, including a review of financial matters, clarifying the distinction between executive and non-executive decisions, changes that arose from the deletion of the Procurement and Risk Manager and, delegation to officers and other minor amendments.

The Cabinet considered these amendments at the meeting held on the 3rd June 2025 and were approved without amendments.

Some further minor amendments would be necessary, including at least one discovered since publication of the agenda. The normal process for minor amendments would be followed in relation to these and post Full Council the Chair would be consulted and Governance Committee notified.

RESOLVED that the amendments to the Constitution be recommend to full council for approval.

(7.22pm to 7.26pm)

8. Local Government Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

The committee heard an update regarding the Council's position relating to the adoption of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaint handling code.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

(7.26pm to 7.33pm)

9. Annual Report of the Governance Committee 2024/25

The Committee received the annual report of the Governance Committee, outlining the work of the Committee for the last municipal year.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Governance Committee for 2024/25 be approved and submitted to Full Council.

(7.33pm to 7.34pm)

10. Multi-Hatted Councillor Dispensation Report

The committee received a report which would allow for a dispensation to enable any multi-hatted member to fully participate in decision making and scrutiny including speaking, voting, and in relation to cabinet members, taking executive decisions as necessary. This would include items of business relating to devolution, LGR and community governance.

Members were made aware that the Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation, in consultation with an independent person, to allow the multi-hatted Governance Committee members to vote on this matter.

RESOLVED that the dispensation be approved for a period of 4 years, or in the event that the Council be abolished in April 2028 (as a result of local government reorganisation), whichever is the sooner.

(7.34pm to 7.36pm)

11. Work Programme

The Committee received an update on the work programme for 2025/26.

RESOLVED that the work programme of the Committee be noted.

(7.36pm to 7.37pm)

12. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7:37pm

Chair



Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

15 October 2025

Monitoring Officer's Report

Report by:
Monitoring Officer

Officer Contact:
Lorraine Browne, Legal & Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer,
email: lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel: 01245 606560

Purpose

To update members on the current position in relation to standards complaints.

Recommendations

1. To note the current statistical information and agree that Appendix 1 should be published on the Council's website to confirm this.
2. To note the update concerning the Chelmsford Association of Local Councils.

1. Standards Complaints

- 1.1. The Appendix to this report sets out the latest statistical data related to standards complaints.

1.2. Members will see that there have been 5 further complaints since the last report in June 2025. The details of the current position in relation to the complaints are set out in the attached appendix. 1 complaint has been completed, 3 are awaiting responses from relevant parties and 1 is subject to investigation.

1.3. It is understood that the Chelmsford Association of Local Councils is now back in action and will be holding their first meeting on 15th October. In other areas, it is often the case that the local association appoints any parish representatives to governance/standards committee and may meet with the Monitoring Officer periodically in support of ethical governance arrangements. A further update as to the role of the Association will be provided as necessary.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Statistical information regarding complaints made

Background papers: Nil

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: It is good practice for statistical information to be provided to the Governance Committee. Where any complaints are referred to in the appendix, a summary of the complaint without any personal data is provided.

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

Consultees: None

Relevant Policies and Strategies:
Complaints Procedure

Standards Enquiries and Investigations Statistics – Localism Act 2011

June 2025 – October 2025

Status of Complaint Categories	Total No.	Case No.	City, Parish tier Councillor	Date Issue First Raised	Alleged Breach or Issue Raised	Current Position
1. No formal complaint, invalid or withdrawn	1	9/25	City	June 25	Alleged bullying/harassment	Unlikely to be official capacity – clarification sought from complainant. No response. Matter closed.
2. No further action required after consultation with one of the Independent Persons						
3. Other action after consultation with one of the independent Persons	2	10-11/25	parish	July 25	Alleged disrespect (social media) and failure to update register of interests	Matters of complaint (except failure to update register of interest) below threshold for action to be taken. Councillor final reminder to update their register of interest. Response awaited.

Status of Complaint Categories	Total No.	Case No.	City, Parish tier Councillor	Date Issue First Raised	Alleged Breach or Issue Raised	Current Position
4. Complaint on hold						.
5. Decision as to appropriate action still awaited	1	12/25	Parish	Sept 2025	Alleged disrespect, breach of confidentiality, disrepute	Clarification as to capacity sought from complainant. Response awaited.
6. Complaints being investigated	1	8/25	City	June 2025	Alleged disrespect and improper use of position	Met threshold for investigation. Investigator instructed and investigation underway.
Total	5					

Formal Complaint Outcomes

	Case No. and Councillor	Committee Date and Decision	Date Issue First Raised	Current Position
Outcome of Investigations				
Other Action				



Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

15 October 2025

Information Governance Update

Report by:

Data Protection Officer

Officer Contact:

John Breen, Information Governance Manager & DPO, email:

john.breen@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel: 01245 606215

Purpose

To provide an annual update on the Council's approach to the assurance and management of information.

Recommendations

1. To note the contents of this report.

Achievements and Further Developments

1. Statutory Requests – information requests comprise of Freedom of Information, Environmental Information Regulations and Data Protection Act Subject Access Requests. In 2024/25 the Information Governance Team, together with services, processed 979 requests and 93% were answered within statutory timescales. This compares with 934 requests received in 2023/24 where 93% were also answered within timescale. Additionally, one case relating to these information requests was referred to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in 2024/25 and the ICO upheld the Council's decision.

2. Data Breaches – the number of data breaches reduced from 38 in 2023/24 to 23 in 2024/25. These breaches are categorised as following (with last year's data in brackets):
 - i. 12 email breaches (24) – consists of officers putting email addresses in the 'To' field instead of 'Bcc' field enabling recipients to see each other's email addresses; or officers sending emails to the wrong recipient.
 - ii. 9 enveloping breaches (11) – where two or more letters for different individuals are put in the same envelope or letters are sent to the wrong address.
 - iii. 0 security breaches (1) – relates to cyber-attacks, phishing attempts etc.
 - iv. 2 other breaches (2) – errors in online forms.

All data breaches are investigated thoroughly in line with the Council's Data Breach Procedure. These investigations also enable the Council and officers a chance to learn from these breaches. In addition, no cases relating to data breaches were referred to the ICO in 2024/25, the same as in 2023/24.

3. Phishing - in August the Council ran phishing campaigns which invited employees and Councillors to click on links and enter in their Council email address and password. In the wider world these types of attacks continue to rise and become more sophisticated as time progresses. The simulation run by the Council was an imitation of a real attack to provide employees and Councillors with more awareness to help them recognise real malicious attacks. During the year, the Council also ran service specific phishing exercises to highlight threats which are specific to that industry. As with all phishing simulations the outcome of this campaign has been carefully considered and is used to inform further the Council's response (including training and awareness) to cyber security risks.
4. Training and Awareness – the 'human factor' is often the weakest link in information security and therefore ensuring staff and Councillors are appropriately trained is a very important element of compliance for data protection and cyber security. In 2018/19, general GDPR eLearning training was delivered to all computer-based staff and the Council now launches a new training exercise for all staff and Councillors on an annual basis. The most recent training course was aimed at education through storytelling and Cyber Police series two was released. The Council achieved a completion rate of 90% (down 2% on last year; up 7% on two years ago). Series three of Cyber Police will be launched to the organisation by the end of the year.
5. Cyber Security Review – cyber security work has been a significant focus for the Council in recent years and further improvements have been made. The Virtual Chief Information Security Officer (vCISO) contract has now been completed, and the CISO role is now held by the Digital Services Manager,

with support from the previous vCISO on an ad hoc basis. The Council has recently signed a new Security Operations Centre (SOC) contract, working with other authorities, which will enable Essex information security sharing. We have continued our technical advancements, including new hardware, upgrades and patching of major systems, and advanced in our journey towards hosted products (either third party or in our own Dynamics 365 platform). We are still focussing on cultural elements, and we have seen progress in this area by refocusing messaging on data protection using examples from individuals' personal lives as well as organisational scenarios. In addition, different kinds of cyber security training are being rolled out to the organisation, including "escape room" style training. There are also some more tabletop exercises scheduled for the next 12 months. It is also likely the Council will have another baseline review as we are working towards the new Cyber Assessment Framework, and this will reflect the progress the Council has made in recent years. We also continue to apply and be successful in receiving government grants for our cyber security plans.

6. Policies – the Council has several policies which link to security and the protection of personal information which have been developed and reviewed in recent years. In the last year the Council has reviewed its Social Media Policy, Photography and Filming Policy and created an Artificial Intelligence Policy.
7. Consents – the GDPR introduced more stringent rules around consents, meaning organisations were required to consider how the consents were obtained in order to determine if they were GDPR compliant. The Council has refined its marketing lists to ensure adequate consents under GDPR are in place and have worked on rebuilding its depleted marketing lists. Currently, the number of general subscribers is 77,497 and Theatres subscribers is 51,309, as the number of subscribers continues to increase each year.
8. Privacy Notices – organisations are required to have privacy notices to inform users how they are going to use their data before receiving it. The Council now has over 30 privacy notices in place across a range of different service areas, which are regularly reviewed and updated.
9. Risk Management – information governance risks have been developed and fit the Council's risk management criteria. They are an important step in the Council's maturing information governance framework and enable the Council to put more effort and resources into areas which carry a higher risk. An example of this has been the Council investing more resources in cyber security training and initiatives. In addition, information governance risks have recently been updated to ensure they are relevant and fit for purpose.
10. Contracts - one of the most difficult areas for the Council is ensuring that external suppliers are contractually aware of their legal responsibilities when handling information on our behalf, including whether they are complying with

data protection law in delivering services for the Council. All contracts issued, including standard Terms and Conditions, Framework Call-off Contracts and Bespoke Contracts contain appropriate data protection clauses. Suppliers are required to agree to these terms during the Procurement process and confirm this upon signature of the contract. OneCouncil holds all contract records that result from sourcing processes dealt with by the Procurement Team direct or where services have provided notification of a new low-value contract. Smaller contracts may still be put in place, by services, outside of our processes but the majority of these are covered by our standard Terms and Conditions.

11. Records Retention – managing records effectively is essential to the efficient running of an organisation. Over time, service areas improve the technology they work with, which has a positive effect on the management of records. Earlier this year, the Council successfully introduced a seven-year retention period for emails held in Microsoft Outlook. Early next year, the Council is implementing a seven-year retention period for documents held in OneDrive. This is an important step to further reducing the amount of information the Council holds and will lead to further improvements in the retention of records.

List of Appendices

Nil

Background papers:

Nil

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: These are set out in the report

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

Consultees: None

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

These are set out in this report



Governance Committee

15 October 2025

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code update report

Report by:
Monitoring Officer

Officer Contact:
Lorraine Browne, Legal & Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer,
email: lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel: 01245 606560

Purpose

To update members in relation to the Council's position relating to the adoption of the LGSCO complaint handling code and latest statistical information from the LGSCO.

Recommendations

1. That the report is noted.
-

1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) issued a new complaint handling code in February 2024. The LGSCO encourages Councils to adopt the Code as quickly as they are able to and has indicated that the Code will be considered in ombudsman casework from April 2026.
- 1.2 The code has been issued as “advice and guidance” for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. This means that councils should consider the Code when developing complaint handling policies and procedures and when responding to complaints. If a council decides not to follow the Code it is expected to have a good reason for doing so.
- 1.3 The Code only applies to complaints where there is no statutory process in place. So, for example, it does not apply to complaints about the behaviour of councillors although the ombudsman can consider how the Council has dealt with such a complaint.
- 1.4 The purpose of the Code is to enable the resolution of complaints raised by individuals promptly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It is also designed to help create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and individuals. The LGSCO has also provided guidance and training tools to support the Council in addressing how best to adopt and comply with the code.
- 1.5 There is also a separate Housing Ombudsman which has statutory reporting requirements and code. In relation to the Council’s homeless duties these fall under the LGSCO.

2. City Council adoption of the new Complaint handling code

- 2.1 The Council’s complaint policy and operational arrangements were broadly compliant with the complaint handling code, but steps to improve reporting and scrutiny arrangements have been necessary to ensure full compliance. The Council moved to a new complaint management system, the Feedback Hub and has been gearing up to adopt the complaints handling code.
- 2.2 Good progress has been made since the last report to Governance Committee in June as set out in the assurance self-assessment. The only further action to be implemented is to introduce the new annual report to Cabinet which would need to happen in 2026.
- 2.3 The following changes have been implemented because of the new code: -

Lead officer (Director of Connected Chelmsford) has been appointed

Lead Member (Deputy Leader) has been appointed

Quarterly reporting of performance in relation to complaints has been introduced. This includes circulation to the Lead Officer/Management Team, Statutory Officers meeting and Lead member.

Relevant amendments to the Complaints Policy that were identified have been made.

An annual Complaints Report will be introduced for Cabinet to scrutinise performance (exact timing to be confirmed).

- 2.4 The existing report from the LGSCO is already reported to Governance Committee annually and is attached to this report at appendix 1. It should be noted that the LGSCO has changed their approach to annual reporting. The data is provided to all Councils annually, but a detailed report is only issued where necessary.
- 2.5 An assurance report by way of a self-assessment in relation to compliance with the complaints handling code is attached at appendix 2.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - annual letter and statistical information provided by LGSCO

Appendix 2 - Self-assessment assurance report to Governance Committee

Background papers: Nil

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: The LGSCO will consider the new complaints handling code in case work from April 2026. Accordingly, the Council has been working towards adopting the complaint handling code and full compliance as quickly as possible. Good progress has been made, and the position will be monitored and reported in accordance with the agreed arrangements.

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

Consultees: None

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Council Complaints Policy

21 May 2025

By email

Mr Eveleigh
Chief Executive
Chelmsford City Council

Dear Mr Eveleigh

Annual Review letter 2024-25

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2025. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. We have listened to your feedback, and I am pleased to be able to share your annual statistics earlier in the year to better fit with local reporting cycles. I hope this proves helpful to you.

[Your annual statistics are available here.](#)

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

In a change to our approach, we will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about an organisation's complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 16 July 2025, alongside our annual Review of Local Government Complaints.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February we published [good practice guides](#) to support councils to adopt our [Complaint Handling Code](#). The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. The guides were issued alongside free [training resources](#) organisations can use to make sure front-line staff understand what to do when someone raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular [complaint handling training](#) programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Appendix 1

Reference	Authority	Category	Subcategory	Received
23020992	Chelmsford City Council	Planning & Development	Enforcement - other	03/04/2024
24000650	Chelmsford City Council	Planning & Development	Enforcement-householder	22/04/2024
24000653	Chelmsford City Council	Planning & Development	Certificate Lawful use or developmt	19/04/2024
24004452	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	25/06/2024
24007163	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	24/07/2024
24007181	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Antisocial behaviour	08/08/2024
24007646	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Land	14/08/2024
24012027	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	09/10/2024
24013648	Chelmsford City Council	Housing	Homelessness	04/11/2024
24013658	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Pollution	24/12/2024
24017837	Chelmsford City Council	Corporate & Other Services	Access to information	15/01/2025
24020705	Chelmsford City Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Refuse & recycling	27/02/2025

Appendix 2 - Self-assessment against the requirements of the Complaints Handling Code

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
1: Definition of a service request and complaint	We recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint, and these are defined in our policies and procedures.	Yes	Complaints policy has been updated accordingly.
2: Exclusions	Our complaints policy sets out circumstances where we would not consider a complaint. These are reasonable and do not deny individuals access to redress.	Yes	This is expressly set out at the end of the policy.
3: Accessibility and awareness	We provide different channels through which individuals can make complaints. These are accessible and we can make reasonable adjustments where necessary	Yes	Complaints may be made online, by letter, by telephone or in person. Complainants are asked to contact us if they need further assistance to lodge a complaint and reasonable adjustments tailored to the needs of individuals are made as necessary.
4: Complaint handling resources	We have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. Complaints are viewed as a core service and resourced accordingly.	Yes	Complaint handling is co-ordinated by the customer service centre staff who support services in managing complaints.

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
5: The complaint handling process	We have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code and individuals are given the option of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction that meets the definition of the complaint in our policy.	Yes	This is covered in the comments, compliments and complaints policy (referred to as the complaints policy). It is normal practice to signpost a person to the complaints policy where they express dissatisfaction with a service provided.
6: Complaints stages (Stage 1)	We process stage 1 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	Yes	This is covered in section 2 of the complaints policy
6: Complaints stages (Stage 2)	We process stage 2 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	Yes	This is covered in section 3 of the complaints policy. Minor updates to reflect current practice have been made to the policy.
7: Putting things right	When something has gone wrong we take action to put things right.	Yes	This is what happens in practice. Performance reporting will help to demonstrate this.
8: Performance reporting and self-assessment	We produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge which includes a self-assessment against the Code.	Yes	Appropriate arrangements have been made for annual performance reports to Cabinet and quarterly reporting to relevant officer(s) and member(s). Self-assessment against the code to be provided to Governance Committee in October 2025 alongside annual ombudsman complaint report. Officer training also being considered.

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
9: Scrutiny & Oversight	We have appropriate senior leadership and governance oversight of the complaints process and performance.	Almost complete (first annual report to Cabinet due 2026).	<p>Appropriate arrangements now in place as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead officer - Louise Goodwin, 2. Lead Member – Deputy Leader 3. Annual performance report to Cabinet (first report due 2026). 4. Quarterly reports to lead officer, MT, lead member, informal cabinet and statutory officers 5. Assurance through self-assessment - to be included in annual report to Governance Committee 6. Annual ombudsman performance report – to be provided to relevant officers/members and included in reports to Cabinet and GC.



Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

15 October 2025

Senior Responsible Officer's report in relation to the Council's RIPA arrangements

Report by:

Senior Responsible Officer

Officer Contact:

Lorraine Browne, Legal & Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer,
lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk, 01245 606560

Purpose

To update members on the Council's RIPA arrangements.

Recommendations

1. To note the annual update for members.
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1. Background

- 1.1. RIPA relates to covert investigatory powers given to local authorities for specific and limited purposes. For local authorities such as Chelmsford City Council only three types of activity may be authorised and this includes directed surveillance, the use of covert human intelligence source and the acquisition of communications data. These powers are overseen by the Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office (IPCO) who undertakes periodic RIPA inspections.

Details of how these types of activity could be authorised by the Council are set out in detail in two policies – the RIPA policy and the RIPA social media policy.

- 1.2. In terms of number of authorisations granted, as has been the case for some years, the Council has not needed to obtain any RIPA approvals during the past year. The Council's RIPA register does however note a directed surveillance recently authorised by another agency. In any event the Council needs to make sure that it remains ready to do so if necessary and that staff are properly trained to ensure investigations continue to be undertaken in a lawful and appropriate way. Ongoing annual reviews of RIPA arrangements are undertaken to support this and provide assurance.
- 1.3. Inspections by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) usually take place every few years. An inspection was undertaken in 2023 by way of a written response being provided to the inspectors for consideration. The inspectors were satisfied with the Council's arrangements and the response provided. The next inspection is due 3 years after the last inspection.

2. Annual Review 2025

- 2.1 Both the Council's RIPA and RIPA Social Media Policies were reviewed in some detail during the inspection in 2020. Further technical updating was subsequently necessary because of legislative changes under the CHIS (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021 and a new CHIS Code of Practice. Personnel updates have also been made because of staff changes. The policy and appointment updates are made as necessary by the SRO under officer delegation.
- 2.2 Training of key personnel was completed in house in 2023, and refresher training is being planned for winter 2025/6. RIPA policies together with training needs continue to be reviewed at least annually together with any ongoing actions through the RIPA officer working group. The officer working group has recently met and have agreed to develop an unmanned aerial vehicle policy (commonly referred to as a "drone") for the planning enforcement team. An audit was undertaken to look at RIPA compliance and this made recommendations. Most of the actions have already been completed and the final recommendation is due to be completed shortly. Part of the annual review process also involves providing an assurance report to the Governance Committee, usually in the autumn.

List of appendices:

Nil

Background papers:

Nil

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: These are set out in the RIPA policies referred to in the report. This report is provided to committee for assurance purposes as to the steps taken to ensure compliance and reduce risk of undertaking covert surveillance without appropriate consideration and authorisation.

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: See legal and constitutional paragraph above.

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

Consultees: none

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Current RIPA and RIPA social media policies



Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

15 October 2025

Work Programme

Report by:
Monitoring Officer

Officer Contact:

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to receive members' comments on the Committee's future work programme.

Recommendations

1. Members are invited to comment on the Committee's work programme, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, and make any necessary amendments to it.
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1. Background

- 1.1. The Work Programme is reviewed by the Committee at each meeting. The current version is attached at Appendix 1 to this report and includes the proposed work for future meetings, based on the Programme content for recent years.

2. Conclusion

- 1.1. Members are invited to comment on the Committee's work programme and make any necessary amendments to it.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Governance Committee Work Programme

Background papers:

Nil

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: None

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

Consultees:

None

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Not applicable

Governance Committee Work Programme

Appendix 1

15 October 2025

Monitoring officer report

Annual SIRO report

Annual Ombudsman report (including new self-assessment in relation to complaint handling code).

Annual SRO RIPA report

Work programme

14th January 2026

Monitoring officer report

Annual ROI report

Annual Gifts and Hospitality report

Annual Whistleblowing report

Training update

Work programme

4th March 2026

committee training session?

June 2026 (TBC)

Monitoring Officer report

Annual Review of Constitution

Annual report for Governance Committee

Work programme

Ad hoc reports

- Community governance review