

COUNCIL MEETING – 3 December 2025

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Public Question from Mr S

I wish to ask who allowed the Pink Ladies to appear on Saturday, 22nd November at Tindall Square? The platformed speaker I heard was categorising opposing political view holders as "*****" and called all immigrants rapists. These are direct quotes that appear on social media.

In what way does this fulfil the following criteria for booking?

"The space is available to event organisers and groups looking to provide appropriately scaled and high profile activities and/or events. These events must prioritise a positive cultural or social impact.

Activities and events in this space should complement:

the cultural and historic setting

the area's brand

the need for circulation of the large numbers of people who visit the High Street

The space will focus on hosting higher profile events/performances. We will consider your application favourably if you can show how it will add to visitors' experience.

We will also consider commercial bookings. However, we will prioritise applications that include a positive cultural or social impact and/or support our cultural strategy.

The hirer is responsible for providing and managing their own infrastructure for any activity within Tindal Square. "

2. Public Question from Mrs H

These questions are submitted by xxx on behalf of the Residents of Runwell, who remain extremely concerned about the illegal development activity on Meadow Lane.

We would like to thank the Council for pursuing High Court Enforcement Action in relation to the illegal development of "The Paddocks" on Meadow Lane, Runwell. We would also like to thank Cllr Steve Davis for his communication on the matter and Paul Brookes and Kristy Dougal for meeting with us to discuss the problem and explain the challenges. We understand that the issue is complex and involves several different agencies, so we have been grateful for the support.

Q1: Further to last week's High Court outcome, we would like to clearly understand the next steps to be taken by the Council and/or the Courts in relation to the Paddocks Site, along with an indicative timeline please.

The Paddocks is only a small part of the multi-plot Meadow Lane "estate". The aggressive, illegal development continues on the whole estate, where land-owners change regularly, but work together. Residents who are directly impacted by this illegal activity remain devastated.

Their privacy been severely compromised by the development, which largely sits above their fence-lines. This has significantly worsened now the few trees that remain on the boundary have shed their leaves. Homes are at risk of landslip, pollution from sewage, land contamination, and unmitigated flood risk. Most do not have the option to sell their homes and move. Residents are also subject to increased noise and light pollution, increasingly dangerous traffic, regular fly tipping and intimidation by the developers. Unlawful activity at the site is having a significant effect on the wider community. The local press has reported increasing anti-social behaviour and crime as an example. The caravans and mobile homes on the site have been aggressively promoted for rent on-line and in local advertisements. The new residents of that community may not be afforded the contracts, rights or legal protection expected by other tenants.

The Runwell community shares its resources with Wickford, the local town centre, however. Wickford is not in the Chelmsford City Council Area – It's in Basildon's boundary. Wickford already has another similar illegal development at Newlands Road and the London Boroughs have moved some of their residents into new, local high-density developments. Another new private housing development is proposed at Barn Hall. Even with all the additional residents, no new local infrastructure has been proposed and the town is evidently struggling with an increasing population. Developments like these cannot be sustained by the existing local infrastructure, amenities and police.

The illegal development activity on the Paddocks alone will generate income well in excess of £0.6m per annum for well organised criminals who exploit the planning system, exploit the land, exploit the local community and exploit the new residents.

Q2: Does the Council agree that enacting High Court Enforcement Action on the Paddocks, whilst granting planning permission on another Meadow Lane plot (Inisheer Farm) within weeks of each other is sending a very mixed message to both the developers and your constituents?

Q3: What is the Council's strategy for managing the continuing aggressive development on the rest of the Meadow Lane Estate?

3. Public Question from Mrs P

Please can you confirm the reasons why PM Marie Goldman has requested additional funding for policing in relation to Wethersfield residents being transported into Chelmsford town centre daily? If there is no risk from these men being dropped off as suggested before why is additional funding needed. From my understanding, there are approximately 15 buses operating on rotation between Colchester, Chelmsford, and Braintree from 10:00 a.m., with the last pick-up at 7:05 p.m.

In addition, when will the Council work with the Home Office to reduce these daily drop-offs and consider implementing a curfew to prevent individuals from walking the streets after dark? The Government website suggests these individuals are here to volunteer, yet we have received reports of them congregating in parks, incidents of theft and proof of videoing and photographing women and children. Could you clarify what measures are being taken to address these concerns.

4. Public Question from Mrs A

Domestic abuse remains insufficiently prioritised within policing and multi-agency safeguarding in Essex. Victims continue to report that their concerns are minimised, investigations are inconsistent, and children's exposure to abuse is not treated with the seriousness required under statutory guidance. The Council has both the legal responsibility and the practical ability to drive improvement through oversight, commissioning, policy setting, and partnership working.

1. Strengthen Multi-Agency Accountability

- Require Essex Police, health, education, housing, and children's services to submit quarterly domestic abuse performance reports to the Council's scrutiny committee.
- These reports should include:
 - response times,
 - rates of arrests and outcomes,
 - victim safeguarding actions,
 - number of repeat incidents,
 - whether child safeguarding referrals were made in every case involving children.
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- Ensure independent audits of cases where concerns were minimised or dropped prematurely.

2. Mandatory Training and Competency Standards

- Require all frontline staff (social workers, housing officers, early help, youth workers, schools, etc.) to complete accredited domestic abuse training aligned with:
 - the Domestic Abuse Act 2021,
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children,
 - Victims' Code.
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- Training must cover:
 - coercive control,
 - post-separation abuse,
 - counter-allegations,
 - child psychological harm,

- how to avoid minimising disclosures.
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- Introduce annual competency checks to ensure professional standards are met.

3. Improve Risk Assessments and Information Sharing

- Require that every domestic abuse incident involving children triggers a Section 47 threshold review, as emotional harm is recognised as a statutory category of significant harm.
- Ensure police, children's services and schools use a single multi-agency risk assessment tool to stop information gaps.
- Create a fast-track system for escalating cases where police have not acted appropriately or where risk is increasing.

4. Create a Victim-Centred Local Framework

- Expand funding for independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) and ensure they are embedded in hospitals, schools, and social care teams.
- Require that victims are offered:
 - same-day support,
 - safety planning,
 - housing options,
 - mental health support for both parent and child.
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- Ensure victims are never told to "go back to the perpetrator" or blamed for the abuse.

5. Strengthen Protection for Children

- Recognise children as direct victims, not bystanders, in line with the Domestic Abuse Act.
- Ensure schools receive clear procedures for identifying abuse, supporting children, and referring concerns.
- Require children's services to document the impact of exposure to abuse and ensure early therapeutic support is offered.

6. Greater Oversight of Essex Police

The Council cannot run the police, but it can hold them to account by:

- demanding attendance at scrutiny meetings,
- requiring responses to inspection findings (HMICFRS),
- requesting action plans for cases where victims were dismissed or minimised,

- urging police to comply with the Victims' Code, including updates to victims, clear explanations, and responsible decision-making.

Where Essex Police repeatedly fail to prioritise domestic abuse, the Council can request intervention from the Police, Fire, and Crime Commissioner (PFCC).

7. Improve Early Help and Prevention

- Provide domestic abuse education in schools.
- Support community programmes for perpetrators to reduce repeat offending.
- Expand public awareness campaigns explaining coercive control and how to report concerns safely

5. Public Question from Mr G

I am aware that Chelmsford City Council provides free use of classes and facilities at the tax payer funded leisure centres for asylum seekers.

Please can you detail all the other services this council provides such as transport services, free entry to museums, drop in centres, on site advisors, child care, donationsetc.

I wish to know all the services that are provided by or organized by the council or council staff and an explanation on why these are offered when we are told how the council struggles to provide services to our own residents due to finances and our own services are constantly being cut

6. Public Question from Mrs S

We are at the very start of the festive period, when Christmas events, work parties, late nights, and heavy alcohol consumption mean an even greater need for safe, reliable taxis. With this in mind, can the Council explain whether its current stance toward Chelmsford's licensed taxi trade is now putting public safety at risk, particularly for young women?

Lady Elish's national report highlights that women make different and more risk-averse decisions about transport, especially at night. With that in mind:

1. Why has the Council permitted significant numbers of Uber vehicles to operate freely in Chelmsford, despite Uber's widely publicised safety concerns relating to women, and despite the damaging impact on Chelmsford-licensed, often Chelmsford resident-taxpaying drivers?
2. Why are out-of-area vehicles allowed to work across Chelmsford with little local oversight, while the Council tightens restrictions and costs on its own licensed drivers?
3. At Beaulieu Park Station, how does the Council justify imposing a £500 permit for rank access, considered by drivers a poor investment or simply

unaffordable, when the result has been an empty rank and stranded passengers? One passenger had to re-board a train back to the city centre just to find a taxi.

4. With Chelmsford residents clearly opposed to this permit charge, what assessment was made of the safety impact before introducing a policy that reduces taxi availability at a brand-new, strategically important station?
5. Why did the Licensing Committee override the advice of its own professional officer and impose rapid vehicle-replacement requirements that leave some drivers facing only months to obtain new vehicles?

In short, does the Council accept that its policies are simultaneously weakening Chelmsford's licensed fleet, undermining public safety during the busiest and riskiest time of year, and disproportionately affecting women who rely on secure, regulated transport at night?