

# Governance Committee Agenda



**4 March 2026**

## **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](mailto:committees@chelmsford.gov.uk)

# Governance Committee

4 March 2026

## AGENDA

### 1. Apologies for Absence

### 2. Minutes

To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 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](mailto: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 Annual Update on Register of Interests in City and Parish tier Councils

8. Annual Gifts and Hospitality Report

9. Annual Whistleblowing Report

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

15 October 2025 at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor K. Franks (Chair)

Councillors H. Ayres, I. Fuller, M. Steel, S. Young

Also in attendance –

Parish Councillor K. Bentley

Independent Person –  
Ms P Mills

### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Jackson, Phil Jeremiah and Danny Lamb.

### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 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 from June to October 2025. Members were advised that five new complaints had been received since the previous report in June. Since the report was published responses had been received to the three outstanding cases.

Complaints 10 & 11/25 (in addition to the complaint mentioned in the report) had now also been completed and 12/25 is now progressing through the early stages of the complaints process. One complaint was currently under investigation.

It was also noted that the Chelmsford Association of Local Councils had been formed and would be holding its first meeting on 15 October 2025. In response to a question, it was confirmed that CALC was a voluntary association which represented local parish councils in the area. Although CALC had no formal authority, it would function as a representative body, and it was normally the case in other areas that the local association would recommend parish representatives to committees where there are parish representatives such as Governance. CALC also serves as a channel for communication and coordination between local councils and has two seats on the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) committee.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted and that the standards enquiries and investigations statistics for the period of June to October 2025 be published online.

(7.03pm to 7.15pm)

## 7. Information Governance/Annual SIRO Update

The Committee received the annual update from on the Council's approach to information governance. Members were advised that 979 statutory information requests were processed during 2024/25, with 93% completed within the statutory timescales, and that the Information Commissioner's Office had upheld the Council's decision in the only case referred during the year.

It was reported that the number of data breaches had reduced from 38 in 2023/24 to 23 in 2024/25, with the majority relating to email and enveloping errors. No cases were referred to the ICO. The Committee also heard about continued work to strengthen cyber security, including completion of the Virtual Chief Information Security Officer contract, the introduction of a new Security Operations Centre contract, and ongoing training for staff and councillors, such as phishing simulations and awareness exercises.

Members discussed records retention, information security and training. Members were advised that a seven year retention period for Outlook had been introduced last year, and a seven year retention period for OneDrive had been agreed by Management Team, the aim being to reduce the volume of legacy information the Council holds. Further advice on implementation was being sought prior to roll-out in February 2026.

In response to a question asked seeking clarification of the difference in processes between Freedom of Information requests, Environmental Information Regulations requests and Subject Access Requests, it was explained that different response processes and exemptions applied to FOI, EIR and SARs, that some FOI requests may be refused where estimated time to comply exceeds 18 hours, and that complex requests are managed jointly by the Information Governance team and the relevant service area because records are often dispersed.

The Council ran four different phishing exercises during the year. The Council continues to review how best to raise awareness of cyber security risks to both members and officers, including through phishing exercises. In addition, cyber awareness training will be launched to officers and members November. Committee members recognised the importance for Members to be included in mandatory training.

**RESOLVED** that the annual report be noted.

(7.15pm to 7.31pm)

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

The Committee received an update on the Council's position regarding the adoption of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaint Handling Code. Members were informed that the Ombudsman's annual statistics and accompanying information had been provided as part of the report.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the new Complaint Handling Code, introduced in February 2024, will be considered by the Ombudsman in casework from April 2026. The Council has already made several policy updates to align with the Code, with one further report required annually to Cabinet which is scheduled for in 2026.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

(7.31pm to 7.33pm)

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

The Committee received a report on the Council's arrangements under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA). Members were reminded that RIPA authorisations may only be granted for specific and limited purposes, including directed surveillance, the use of covert human intelligence sources, and the acquisition of communications data.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Council had not required any RIPA authorisations during the reporting period but that a RIPA authorisation for a third party had been noted. The last inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) took place in 2023 with the next inspection expected to take place in 2026.

It was reported that the RIPA and RIPA Social Media Policies had been reviewed and updated to reflect recent legislative and personnel changes. Training for key officers is scheduled for January 2026.

The Committee noted that a new Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) policy was being developed. While UAVs may fall within the scope of RIPA in limited circumstances,

their general use is expected to remain non-RIPA, as most applications will not meet the legal threshold for authorisation.

Members suggested that an annual report on the general usage of Drones should be considered.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

(7.34pm 7.46pm)

## 10. Work Programme

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

**RESOLVED** that the work programme of the Committee be noted.

(7.46pm to 7.48pm)

## 11. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7:49pm

Chair



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# Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**4 March 2026**

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## Monitoring Officer's Report

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Report by:  
Monitoring Officer

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

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### Purpose

To update members on the current position in relation to standards complaints and to update in relation to a number of other relevant areas, including the government response to consultation on the standards regime, a report in March 2025 by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the new Ethics and Integrity Commission, training, gifts and hospitality records and the resignation of one of the Independent Persons.

### 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 various updates set out in this report.
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## 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 2 new complaints since the last report in October 2025. The details of the current position in relation to the complaints are set out in the attached appendix. The investigation has now been completed and the matter will proceed to hearing. All the other complaints have been completed as set out in the appendix.

## 2. Other updates

2.1 In October 2025, the new Ethics and Integrity Commission was established. This will replace and build upon the work previously done by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

2.2 In November 2025, Government also responded to the consultation on “Strengthening the Standards and Conduct framework for Local Authorities in England” in November 2025. It said “in summary, we intend to legislate for a whole system reform of the current regime as set out in Localism Act 2011. The measures will include:

- the introduction of a mandatory code of conduct, which will include a behavioural code, for all local authority types and tiers
- a requirement that all principal authorities convene formal standards committees, to include provisions on the constitution of standards committees to ensure objectivity, accountability and transparency
- the requirement that all principal authorities offer individual support during any investigation into code of conduct allegations to both the complainant and the councillor subject to the allegation
- the introduction at the authority level of a ‘right for review’ for both complainant and the subject elected member to have the case reassessed on grounds that will be set out in legislation
- powers for authorities to suspend elected members for a maximum of 6 months for serious code of conduct breaches, with the option to withhold allowances during suspension for the most serious breaches and introduce premises and facilities bans either in addition or as standalone sanctions
- in response to the most serious allegations involving police investigation, or where sentencing is pending, the introduction of powers to suspend elected members on an

interim basis for an initial period of 3 months which, if extended, will require regular review

- a new disqualification criterion for any elected member subject to the maximum period of suspension more than once within 5 years
- the creation of a new national appeals function, to consider appeals from elected members to decisions to suspend them and/or withhold allowances, and for complainants if they consider their complaint was mishandled. Any appeal submitted will only be permitted after complainant or elected member has invoked their 'right for review' of the local standards committee decision has been invoked and that process is completed. " The timeframe for this to be brought forward is not known.

2.3 An action arising from the annual governance statement was for the report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life on recognising and responding to early warning signs in public sector bodies to be considered. At appendix 2, 20 points for reflection have been attached to this report to assist the committee in understanding the type of issues that are highlighted in the report. Some of these areas overlap with the Corporate Peer Challenge which met again with the Council in January 2026 and recently reported its findings. The Monitoring Officer has now completed the review for the annual governance process in relation to this report and does not recommend that any further specific actions are necessary arising from this report.

2.4 Committee members have now received training in relation to standards hearings. This was delivered on 14<sup>th</sup> January by an external trainer.

2.5 Danny Lamb, who served as one of the Independent Persons to the Governance Committee has resigned. This will be reported to Annual Council in May. The Monitoring Officer has thanked Danny for his work supporting the committee and particularly the Monitoring Officer with initial assessment of complaints.

2.6 Finally, the Monitoring Officer has reviewed record keeping arrangements for gift and hospitality declarations. It is recommended that both officer and member declarations are kept normally for 4 years (this is equivalent to a term of office and so where a term of office is extended the records will be kept for a period equivalent to that term of office).

### 3. List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Statistical information regarding complaints made

Appendix 2 – 20 points of reflection (pages 7&8) taken from the CSPL report (March 2025)

Background papers: MHCLG response to consultation on standards  
[Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#)

Committee on standards in public life report (March 2025) - [Recognising and responding to early warning signs in public sector bodies](#)

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#### Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: It is good practice for statistical information (and other updates) to be provided to Governance Committee. Where any complaints are referred to in the appendix, a summary of the complaint without any personal data is provided. The other updates are provided so that committee members are aware of recent developments including those relating to action arising from the Annual Governance Statement.

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: Reviewing learning from the report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life referred to in the report helps reduce the risk of governance failure by the Council.

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

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**Consultees:** None

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**Relevant Policies and Strategies:**

Complaints Procedure

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**Standards Enquiries and Investigations Statistics – Localism Act 2011**

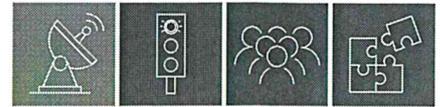
**October 2025 – January 2026**

<b>Status of Complaint Categories</b>	<b>Total No.</b>	<b>Case No.</b>	<b>City, Parish tier Councillor</b>	<b>Date Issue First Raised</b>	<b>Alleged Breach or Issue Raised</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
<b>1. No formal complaint, invalid or withdrawn</b>						
<b>2. No further action required after consultation with one of the Independent Persons</b>	2	13/25	Parish	Dec 25	Alleged disclosure of confidential information	Insufficient evidence of breach. NFA. Closed.
		1/26	Parish	Jan 26	Alleged disrespect & bullying	Unlikely to amount to breach of code of conduct. NFA. Closed

Status of Complaint Categories	Total No.	Case No.	City, Parish tier Councillor	Date Issue First Raised	Alleged Breach or Issue Raised	Current Position
<b>3. Other action after consultation with one of the independent Persons</b>	3	10-11/25  12/25	Parish  Parish	July 25  Sept 25	Alleged disrespect (social media) and failure to update register of interests  Various allegations including alleged disrespect, breach of confidentiality, disrepute	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. Register of Interest updated. NFA closed  Clarification as to capacity sought from complainant. Response provided. Initial assessment determined below threshold NFA but reminder issued to councillor on one aspect for future
<b>4. Complaint on hold</b>						.
<b>5. Decision as to appropriate action still awaited</b>						.
<b>6. Complaints being investigated</b>	1	8/25	City	June 2025	Alleged disrespect and improper use of position	Met threshold for investigation. Investigation complete. Pre-hearing matters complete. Scheduled for hearing 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2026.
<b>Total</b>	6					

### Formal Complaint Outcomes

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



# Points for reflection

## Building accountable organisations

1. How do you support your employees in understanding how their role, and the purposes of your organisation, serves the public?
2. Is it clear to your employees how decisions are made within your organisation and who is accountable for them?
3. What do you do to build strong relationships with those bodies that report to your organisation as well as those bodies you are accountable to?

## Identifying and assessing risks

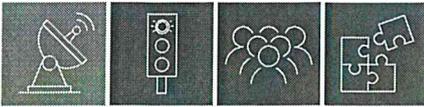
4. How do you know that the arrangements you have in place for the identification and mitigation of risks are effective?
5. How do you assure yourself that the data your organisation collects to assess its activities is of a high quality and that there is sufficient capability within the organisation to interpret the data intelligently?
6. How do you ensure your organisation views complaints as valuable feedback reflecting the public's experience of its service and uses that data to spot systemic issues and make improvements?

## Speaking up

7. What do you do to build an open culture where people feel comfortable raising issues, asking questions and sharing their ideas?
8. How do you help your employees to understand that everyone in your organisation has a responsibility to speak up when they see something going wrong?
9. Are there clear and well-understood ways for people to raise concerns formally? How do you know these routes are trusted? How do you ensure that when people speak up, they are protected and not victimised?

## Development and performance management

10. How does your organisation support the development of leaders who have the skills and confidence to handle a crisis appropriately?
11. How is listening to feedback and embedding learning incorporated into the process for assessing your organisation's executive and non-executive leaders?



## Public scrutiny

12. Is your organisation as transparent as it can be when deciding what information to publish about its activities, including the provision of contextual detail where appropriate?
13. Could your organisation do more to engage proactively with the public and to understand the public's perspectives on how to improve your organisation's public services?
14. When things go wrong, how quickly do you acknowledge the failure and offer a meaningful apology?

## Learning lessons

15. Does your organisation have mechanisms in place to support a robust corporate memory of why previous decisions were or were not taken?
16. How do you ensure that the lessons learned from evaluating projects and policies are shared within the organisation and that these lessons inform future decisions?
17. How do you ensure that your organisation regularly considers what it can learn from the successes and failures of other public bodies?

## Board scrutiny

18. How do you ensure that your board receives the information it needs about risks and issues in a format that is most useful to board members, enabling them to evaluate the significance of that information?
19. How is your board encouraged to scrutinise robustly the decisions made by your organisation? Is it sufficiently curious? Does it listen to the views of public service users?
20. What do you do to ensure that your board has the right balance of skills, backgrounds, experiences and independence of judgement? Is understanding prospective board members' values and commitment part of the recruitment process?



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## Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**4 March 2026**

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### **Update on Register of Interests for City and Parish tier authorities, including city council officers**

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Report by:  
Monitoring Officer

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Officer Contact:  
Lorraine Browne, Legal & Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer,  
[lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk), 01245 606560

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#### **Purpose**

To update members on the register of interest for City and Parish tier authorities, including city council officers.

#### **Recommendations**

1. To note update.
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### **1. Background**

- 1.1. To help improve oversight and increase compliance in relation to the completion of the members register of interest an annual assurance report was introduced in 2022. After the May 2023 elections an online form was introduced for city councillors to complete the register of interests. Councillors are required to submit a new form each term of office and part of the process also includes an annual update to help councillors comply with their obligations to keep the register of interests up to date. City councillors received the annual reminder to update their register of interests in January 2026.

- 1.2. Parish tier Councils use a form which is completed and usually scanned and submitted electronically to the city council. The potential to extend the online form process to parish tier councils has been explored but this is dependent upon the adoption of the model code and the parish tier council wishing to ask all councillors to resubmit their register of interest forms in advance of the next election cycle. Currently, twin hatted councillors at city and parish tier must complete two separate forms, one online for city and one for parish tier authority. Parish clerks were sent an annual reminder in January 2026 for them to issue to their parish tier councillors.
- 1.3. The Council introduced online forms for the officer code of conduct in 2025. This process also includes an annual reminder to officers to review their register of interests and update this as necessary. The annual reminder to officers will be due in March and arrangements are being made for this to be sent through staff communications. This helps ensure that the register of interests & declarations for officers is also kept up to date
- 1.4. Set out below is the position as at the time of writing the report in relation to the completion of register of interest forms for members. These have been RAG (red/amber/green) rated.

## 2. Table detailing returned forms

Council	Amount of Cllrs (excl Vacancies)	Amount of submitted ROI Forms
Chelmsford City	57	57
Boreham	10	10 (1 vacancy) (complete)
Broomfield	12	12 (1 vacancy) (complete)
Chelmer Village	10	10 (5 vacancies) (complete)
Chelmsford Garden Community Council	13	13 (complete)
Chignal	7	7 (complete)
Danbury	10	10 (2 vacancies) (complete)
East Hanningfield	6	6 (1 vacancy) (complete)
Galleywood	9	9 (complete)
Good Easter	7	7 (complete)
Great & Little Leighs	9	9 (1 vacancy) (complete)
Great Baddow	12	12 (3 vacancies) (complete)
Great Waltham	11	11 (complete)
Highwood	6	6 (1 vacancy) (complete)
Little Baddow	9	9 (complete)
Little Waltham	7	7 (complete)
Margaretting	6	6 (1 vacancy) (complete)
Pleshey	7	7 (complete)

Rettendon	9	9 (complete)
Roxwell	6	6 (1 vacancy) (complete)
Runwell	11	11 (2 vacancies) (complete)
Sandon	6	6 (2 vacancies) (complete)
South Hanningfield	10	10 (2 vacancies) (complete)
South Woodham Ferrers	19	19 (1 vacancy) (complete)
Springfield	13	13 (complete)
Stock	6	5 (3 vacancies) (1 outstanding)
West Hanningfield	7	7 (1 vacancy) (complete)
Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre	8	7 (1 vacancy) (1 outstanding)
Writtle	14	14 (1 vacancy) (complete)

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:

None





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# Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**4 March 2026**

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## Gifts and Hospitality Report

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Report by:  
Monitoring Officer

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### Officer Contact:

Lorraine Browne, Legal & Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer, email: [lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk), tel: 01245 606560

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### Purpose

To update the Committee on offers of Gifts and Hospitality from January to December 2025.

### Recommendations

That the report to be noted.

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## 1. Background

- 1.1. At its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010, the Standards Committee agreed that an annual report should be made on offers of Gifts and Hospitality which have been made to Members of the Council and when the Governance Committee assumed responsibility for these matters, this annual report was brought to this Committee.

## 2. Offers Made

- 2.1. Offers of gifts and hospitality to members of Chelmsford Council for the period January to December 2025 can be found at Appendix 1. In summary, there were five declarations by members.

2.2. With regards to offers of gifts and hospitality to officers of the Council, there were two offers to be noted for 2025.

2.3. The Monitoring Officer confirms that it was appropriate for members and officers to accept the offers made.

#### List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Offers of Gifts and Hospitality (Councillors) January to December 2025

Appendix 2 – Offers of Gifts and Hospitality (Officers) January to December 2025

#### Background papers:

Nil

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#### Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: Councillors and Officers are required to declare any offers of gifts and hospitality above a certain threshold (£50) and it has been the Council's longstanding practice to annual report the details to Governance Committee.

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: No equalities impact assessment necessary.

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

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#### Consultees:

None

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#### Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Member and Employee Codes of Conduct

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**APPENDIX 1**

**Offers of Gifts and Hospitality (Councillors) – January to December 2026**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Gift/Hospitality</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Whether Accepted</b>
72	21/1/25	Chris Davidson	Sit down meal and ball point pen	Approx £50	Rotary Club of Chelmsford	Accepted – The gifts were a routine token of thanks offered to all speakers at the members' lunch.
73	18/8/25	James Raven	Ticket to Chelmsford City Live (Duran Duran event) 5 <sup>th</sup> July 2025	£60	Chelmsford City Racecourse Events Team	Accepted - To assess whether issues experienced at the Friday event had been resolved the following day.
74	16/8/25	Lynne Foster	2 Tickets to Sunday Night 7 <sup>th</sup> September, BBC 2 in the Park	£320	BBC Radio 2, London, W1A 1AA	Accepted - To provide Council representation at a major event held at a key city landmark.
75	10/9/25	Dan Clark	2 Guest passes to Radio 2 In the Park	£200	BBC Radio 2, London, W1A 1AA	Accepted – A standard ticket had been purchased, but the guest passes provided access to engage with the event organisers.
76	3/9/25	Jennie Lardge	2 x tickets for BBC Radio 2 in the Park	£136	BBC Radio 2, London, W1A 1AA	Accepted in the councillor's role as Cabinet Deputy for Cultural Services

**APPENDIX 2****Offers of Gifts and Hospitality (Officers) – January to December 2025**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Gift/Hospitality</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Whether Accepted</b>
228	20.03.25	Chief Executive	Cricket T-Shirt	£50	Essex Cricket	Yes – donation to the council made at meeting between Chief Executives of both bodies at Council offices - accepted as council representative
229	20.03.25	Chief Executive	Signed cricket T-Shirt	£100	Essex Cricket	Yes – Donated to Mayors Charity



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# Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**4<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

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## Annual Whistleblowing Report

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### Report by:

Director of Connected Chelmsford

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### Officer Contact:

Lorraine Browne Legal and Democratic Services Manager, Tel: 01245 606560,  
email: [lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk)

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### Purpose

To provide an annual update to members of the Governance Committee on the operation of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

### Recommendations

1. To note the contents of the report as regards whistleblowing allegations received for 2025 calendar year.
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### 1. Background

- 1.1. The Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure was first introduced in October 1997. Since that time the policy has been updated and reviewed periodically to ensure it is compliant with any changes in legislation or guidance, most notably a light touch review was undertaken during 2023/4.
- 1.2. The policy establishes a system whereby employees of the Council, including agency workers, consultants, users of its services, members of the public and Councillors, are able to report suspected wrongdoing. By doing so the Council

publicly declares that it does not tolerate malpractice or fraudulent activities in the operation of its services.

- 1.3. The Council's Whistleblowing Policy highlights the legal protection for workers who "blow the whistle" (i.e. the 'Whistleblower') and ensure that they do not suffer any recriminations, victimisation or harassment as a result of raising a concern with the Council. An employee who makes a protected disclosure benefits from legal protection if they have a reasonable belief that the issue being raised is in the public interest.
- 1.4. Employees are protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 as amended, which means that the Council cannot discriminate against them because they made such a complaint. That protection is not subject to any qualifying period of employment and is referred to as a 'day one' right in employment law. The principles of protection are also applied to non-employees under the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.
- 1.5. The Council's appointed Whistleblowing Officer is the Director of Connected Chelmsford. However, the day-to-day management and handling of issues raised is dealt with by the Legal & Democratic Services Manager or, in their absence, the Human Resources Services Manager. Both have delegated authority to receive and investigate complaints under the procedure whilst safeguarding the confidentiality of the complainant as far as is possible. Normally this means the identity of the whistleblower will only be known by the officer managing the complaint and any investigator. All complaints raised are fully considered and dealt with as quickly as possible.
- 1.6. In some cases the issue raised is not strictly a whistleblowing matter but arises from a complaint about a service received from the Council. In those cases the complainant is directed to the complaints process and the matter dealt with through that procedure instead if the person wishes to proceed.
- 1.7. As is best practice an annual report is made to the Governance Committee regarding the issues addressed. This report sets out the position in relation to reports made during 2025. The Council's existing Retention and Destruction Policy in relation to Whistleblowing complaints is to retain records for 6 years after matters are completed and accordingly the report has been updated to include data from the last 6 years.

## 2. Position Update and Analysis

2.1. The table below provides a history of the number of whistleblowing reported cases received over the previous years:

Year	Number of complaints received
2020 (January - October 2020)	5
2021 (November 2020 to November 2021)	12
2022 (December 2021 to September 2022)	5
2023 (October 2022 to Sept 23/October to December 2023)	9/1
2024 (January to December)	9
2025 (January to December)	17

2.2. A summary of the 17 complaints received over the past year is set out below. Members are reminded that limited information cannot be provided due to the confidentiality protection to which whistle blowers are entitled. 4 reports were made that were directed to the wrong body or where the person named did not work for the Council so no further action was taken. 5 reports were service provision related (2 were considered more appropriate to be dealt with under the complaints process and 3 were investigated and appropriate responses provided). 8 reports alleged misconduct of staff (eg fraud, intoxication, bullying, harassment). Of the 8 matters 2 (received December 2025) investigations have not yet concluded. There have also been a further 8 whistleblowing allegations received during 2026, most of which have recently been concluded.

### How they were processed

No public interest dimension so could not be dealt with as a WB complaint, or was instead assessed and investigated as a service complaint or grievance	2
Assessed and investigated as a whistleblowing complaint.	11
Not capable of resolution by the City Council (i.e. outside our jurisdiction)	4

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- 2.3. It is apparent that both staff and members of the public have confidence in the Council and are willing to raise concerns. The electronic facilities for logging complaints through the dedicated whistleblowing mailbox via a website form remain the preferred method of communication with only two reports being made by email instead. The publicity arrangements for whistleblowing also appear to be embedded and well known, which is demonstrated by the increased number of reports being made.
- 2.4. Every effort is made to maintain confidentiality where requested. When this is not possible complainants are advised and provided with the reasons. Complainants' details are not disclosed until they are made aware of how they will be used. This allows officers to follow up on concerns raised and to provide progress updates and feedback when a case is concluded. This approach instils trust and confidence in the arrangements in place and fosters a relationship of openness and accountability. However, it should be noted that almost half of the reports made during 2025 were anonymous. This does sometimes make it more difficult to investigate concerns due to lack of information and there is no opportunity to obtain further information.
- 2.5. The policy is part of staff induction training and is easily accessible on the Council's website. It should be noted that Audit and Risk Committee have reviewed the Fraud and Corruption Policy and Anti Bribery Policy. The Whistleblowing Policy has been reviewed to ensure they are aligned and compliment the overall arrangements. Training in relation to whistleblowing and fraud/corruption training modules was provided to senior managers and all staff at the end of 2024.

### 3. Conclusion

- 3.1. Members of the Governance Committee are asked to note the details as to the actions taken and complaints received for the latest annual review.

List of appendices: None

Background papers: None

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### Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: The legislative requirements are addressed in the report which falls within the remit of Governance Committee.

Financial: None, although the process enables reporting of potential fraudulent activities and malpractices that may affect the financial position of the Council

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

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

Personnel: The process underpins the promotion of a culture of openness and transparency and creates an environment where whistleblowing is encouraged and supported.

Risk Management: The process assists to minimise the risk of malpractice and fraud within the Council

Equality and Diversity: The policy and procedure has not changed so no impact assessment is required

Health and Safety: Establishment of whistleblowing procedures ensures that both Council employees and users of its services are able to confidentially report matters of concern (including those with H&S implications) and for these to be proactively addressed.

Digital: None

Other: None

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#### Consultees:

None

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#### Relevant Policies and Strategies:

The report takes into account the following policies and strategies of the Council:

- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure
  - Fraud and Corruption Strategy
  - Anti-bribery Policy
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# Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**4 March 2026**

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## Work Programme

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Report by:  
Monitoring Officer

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### 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

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### 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

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### Consultees:

None

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### Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Not applicable

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**Governance Committee Work Programme**

**Appendix 1**

**4<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

Monitoring officer report

Annual ROI report

Annual Gifts and Hospitality report

Annual Whistleblowing report

Training update

Work programme

**June 2026 (TBC)**

Monitoring Officer report

Annual Review of Constitution

Annual report for Governance Committee

**Community governance review**

Work programme

Ad hoc reports