

MINUTES
of the
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 10 February 2025 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor J. Jeapes (Chair)
Councillor A. Thompson (Vice-Chair)

Councillors, D. Clark, H. Clark, P. Clark, J. Deakin, S. Dobson, K. Franks, I. Fuller, L. Mascot,
M. Steel, P. Wilson.

Also in attendance –
Councillors, N. Dudley and D. Eley

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Canning, Davey and Davis. Councillor I. Fuller and Councillor P. Clark substituted for Councillor P. Davey and Councillor S. Davis respectively.

2. Chairs Announcements

No announcements were made for this meeting.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Decision and Action Sheet

The Committee considered and noted the decision and action sheet since the last meeting on 4th November 2024.

5. Declaration of Interests

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.

6. Public Question Time

No questions were asked or statements made.

7. Decisions Called-In

The Committee noted that no decisions taken by the Cabinet had been called-in.

8. Cabinet Portfolio Update from the Cabinet Member for an Active Chelmsford

Councillor Dudley updated the Committee on their role as Cabinet Member for an Active Chelmsford. They provided an overview of their key roles and responsibilities, these areas being: Leisure Centres, Community Sport and Wellbeing, Hylands House and Community Engagement.

Regarding leisure centres the Committee was informed that there were four centres within Chelmsford, with this year having a record attendance across all sites with a broad customer base.

Riverside had been shortlisted and placed 2nd for the Association for Public Service Excellence Performance Network Awards. Members were advised that there was an active health programme at the gym which had over 600 referrals from Chelmsford primary care providers. A cancer rehab programme had been designed for patients across all stages of treatment, with a cardiac rehab being launched in February 2025 with aims to expand the initiative to primary care partners.

South Woodham Ferrers Leisure Centre had undertaken a recent refurbishment, and this was reported to have been on-budget and on-schedule, with benefits relating to energy efficiencies highlighted as well as improved aesthetics.

Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre had undergone a refurbishment of the gym which had seen an increase of 250 new members, highlighting the value of the works undertaken. Community athletics events would be continuing.

Dovedale Sports Centre had not undergone refurbishment and was due for a refresh with a proposed date of June 2025.

Hylands house had undergone aesthetic changes with the installation of LED lights in the car park and footpaths and was awarded the gold award in the Green meetings and Tourism Accreditation programme.

The Cabinet Member summarised the community sport and wellbeing events across Chelmsford as well as Livewell and health meetings that had been attended.

In response to the questions and statements from Committee Members, it was advised that;

- "With You In Mind" would be continuing for another year.
- "Play in the Park" will continue as long as charges were secured and would continue to look for additional funding where possible.
- In relation to data specifics, members were informed that they could request further information relating to specific areas, but this was not the purpose of this presentation.

Officers across the portfolio were praised for their hard work and dedication.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Portfolio Update to be noted.

(7.08pm to 7.26pm)

9. Cabinet Portfolio Update from the Cabinet Member for a Safer Chelmsford

Councillor Eley updated the Committee on their role as Cabinet Member for a Safer Chelmsford. They provided an overview of their key roles and responsibilities, these areas being: Public Health & Protection Services, Recycling & Waste Collection and Street Care.

The Cabinet Member summarised meetings that had been attended during their duration as the Cabinet Member since May 2024.

Public Health and Protection – Multiple meetings and events were attended and it was shared that Chelmsford City Council had agreed to support the Air Strategy for Essex which was out for public consultation by Essex County Council. It was reported that Public Health and Protection had dealt with over 5200 requests in 2023/24 with similar figures looking likely within the 2024/25 year.

Recycling and Waste Collection – Chelmsford City Council had agreed to support the Waste Strategy for Essex in September 2024 and that the Garden Waste Subscription service was agreed in January 2025 with a rollout of March 2025.

A summary of statistics for 2023/24 were provided to the Committee:

- Recycling rates were at 53.5% compared to the Essex average of 48.8%.
- 22,492 tonnes had been composted [garden waste and food waste] compared to the Essex average of 12,123 tonnes.
- 14,514 tonnes of dry recycling [reused/recycled] compared to the Essex average of 10,130 tonnes.
- 97.5% of flats were receiving either full/partial recycling.
- 76.76% of flats were receiving food waste collections.
- Over 230,000 household collections per week.

Street Care – Toilets on Market Road had reopened in October 2024 following closures due to a fire. On-going reviews were being undertaken in relation to Chelmsford Market. The SCRAP Fly Tipping campaign was launched in January 2024.

The Cabinet Member shared the following highlights to the committee:

- Women's Safety – Active Bystander, an overview was given of the social media campaign and resources from the initiatives. Other local authorities had launched their own Women's Safety initiatives.
- Chelmsford Market – Nominated for Britain's Favourite Market 2025 and won the Innovation Champion Award in June 2024.
- RSPCA Gold PawPrints Awards – Public Health and Protection were awarded two awards for Stray Dog Services and Licensing of Activities involving animals.

- A grant was awarded by Keep Britain Tidy for two Gum Buster machines.
- Partnership working was evident throughout the I am Love sculpture and tree giveaway works.

In January 2025 Chelmsford City Council was notified that their interim Purple Flag assessment was successful.

In response to the questions and statements from Committee Members, it was advised that;

- Staff were commended for their work on the Active Bystander initiative.
- Unneeded garden waste bins were set to be collected in Summer 2025. Take up for the service was reported at 11701 households at the time of this meeting.
- Street musicians are not currently licensed but are monitored through the councils policy and are asked to move on if complaints are received. There were no current active complaints.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Portfolio Update to be noted.

(7.27pm to 7.49pm)

10. Annual Presentation by Safer Chelmsford Partnership and Essex Police

Safer Chelmsford Partnership:

The Committee received a presentation from the Safer Chelmsford Partnership. The Committee were advised of the partnerships priorities for 2024/25.

In relation to the Serious Crime Duty it was shared that a Strategic Needs Assessment was needed to be undertaken. This detailed monthly data and was used to show trends in data, data throughout different wards and cross-border. Chelmsford had 0.53 offences per 1000 population, with the Moulsham and Central ward ranked at the highest.

Members were introduced to the Essex Prevent Delivery Group and their priorities and the work that was undertaken in relation to that, with the use of e-bulletins and training sessions to assist with the goals.

The Committee were informed of the definitions of anti-social behaviour and the tools that were utilised to combat this.

A summary of the partnerships working was provided to members highlighting the wide areas covered, including working with the Chelmsford BID and other services to assist with the protection of the evening community.

Referrals and signposting to outreach services, homelessness charities, drug and alcohol services, mental health and social care were explained with early intervention and prevention partnership work being detailed.

The committee were given details of the work undertaken in relation to “Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls” (VAWG). Businesses were signing up to be safe places and positive changes were being made to public places with the assistance of Project Minerva.

In response to the questions and statements from Committee Members, it was advised that;

- Marconi Ward placed second for the amount of serious crime offences by ward in Chelmsford.
- Bedding Sweeps were explained to Members, sharing that the officers would remove any unused bedding left by rough sleepers if it was apparent that the bedding had been left for a long duration.
- TruCAM speed cameras were hired by parish councils due to area specific road safety and would not be financially viable for Chelmsford City Council to supply due to the resource intensity.

Essex Police:

The Committee received a presentation from Essex Police detailing the structure of the Local Community Police and the Force Plan priorities for 2024-2026.

The following was highlighted to the Committee:

- Over a twelve-month period to December 2024, the Chelmsford district had a 9.6% decrease in all crimes.
- The Chelmsford District had a reduction in Anti-Social behaviour reporting with a 7.6% reduction in the last 12 months.
- Solved rate for all offences had increased 1% in last 12 months to 14.8% (increased 2.8% in last 2 years).
- Burglary dwelling had a 23.5% reduction and burglary non dwelling has seen a 37% reduction.

It was shared that the public perception survey had been undertaken independently and the figures show that confidence in policing had stabilised since the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to the questions and statements from Committee Members, it was advised that;

- Statistics for rural areas were contained in a separate report and could be requested.
- PCSO's were to remain but it was clear that changes to budgets and funding could mean changes in how PCSO's were to be utilised.
- Essex Police shared that they would attend 100 per cent of robberies as long as there was a present victim. Attendance was monitored closely.

RESOLVED that the annual presentation by Safer Chelmsford Partnership and Essex Police be noted.

(7.50pm to 9.04pm)

11. Report on Decisions Taken Under Delegation to the Chief Executive

The Committee received a report on the decisions taken under delegation to the Chief Executive for the period 1 November 2023 to 31 January 2025.

A question was raised in relation to how some of the decisions were agreed, it was reported that the criteria for delegated authority had been met for the items listed in the report. The Chair confirmed that they always challenged the reasons for decision being taken urgently

RESOLVED that:

- the report on Decisions Taken Under Delegation to the Chief Executive be noted
- a future item on the process of urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive be added to the work programme.

(9.04pm to 9.09pm)

12. Annual Report of the Committee (2023/24)

The Committee received a report on the activity of the scrutiny function of the Council for 2022/23, in accordance with the Local Code of Corporate Governance (Core Principle 6 – Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability), which was adopted by the Council on 23rd April 2008.

The Chair explained that the recent Peer Review Challenge highlighted areas of scrutiny that were to be improved and asked for a future item be added to the forward plan to address this and welcomed comments from the Committee.

RESOLVED that the Council be recommended to approve the Committee's Annual Report on the Scrutiny function for 2023/24 for subsequent publication.

(9.10pm to 9.11pm)

12. Work Programme

The Committee considered a report on its work programme which had been updated following the last meeting on 4th November 2024. It was advised that as additional items had been added for future meetings, officers would discuss with the Chair and Vice Chair the appropriate meetings for them to be considered.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

(9.10pm to 9.12pm)

13. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.12pm.