

COUNCIL MEETING – 16 July 2025

CABINET QUESTION TIME

1. Question from Councillor Pappa to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property

Every evening, as the clock strikes six, our city centre — the heart of our community — starts to fall silent. The shutters come down, the shops close, and yet thousands of Chelmsford's residents are just finishing work.

This calls for a simple first step: a city-wide consultation, a pilot, and a report.

Does the Cabinet Member agree that this should be looked at and that it is appropriate for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to put this on their next agenda?

2. Question from Councillor Bonnett to the Cabinet Member for a Safer Chelmsford

Residents in my Ward are complaining that dog bins are not being collected and that this hot weather is making matters worse. I understand that there is a serious shortage of Street Care staff; what is the Cabinet Member doing to resolve this problem?

3. Question from Councillor Whitehead to the Leader of the Council

Question 1:

The Mayor and Consort recently attended the Strassenfest in Backnang. There were four Mayors at the official ceremony, three wearing civic regalia but, due to the recent decision by the City Council not to allow the replica chain of office and badge to be taken to Backnang, our Mayor had no regalia.

This was disappointing and does not reflect the standing of the Mayor and the City of Chelmsford.

Whilst the City Council has to be aware of the value of the badge, the Mayor's chain was purchased by the Council to specifically to avoid damage to the valuable original regalia and is used extensively.

Members will be aware of the need to observe the rules on their personal security and it is therefore concerning that the Mayor has to return the replica regalia to the Civic Centre – sometimes late in the evening – and no longer has the Mayor's car and Chauffeur for this purpose.

It is possible to purchase a good copy chain of office and badge for under £1000 which would enable them to be taken home by the Mayor when appropriate to avoid the problem of security.

Would the City Council accept a donation of £1000 to purchase a replica chain and badge so that our Mayors will have both a deserved symbol of office and ensure that their security is not compromised?

Question 2:

Whilst it is accepted that the financial situation is not as healthy as we would like it to be, the City Council's Cultural Strategy encourages cultural exchanges and with the High School deciding not to send pupils to Germany next year there is a danger of Twinning declining at a time when working together in Europe has once again become very important.

This is the 35th Anniversary of the Town Twinning Partnership with Backnang and this was marked by the Mayor of Backnang when our Mayor, Councillor Janetta Sosin visited the town at his invitation last month. Backnang has hosted our Mayors six times since their new Mayor was elected, whilst we have only hosted their Mayor only once.

Will the City Council invite the Mayor of Backnang to come to Chelmsford in 2026?

4. Question from Councillor Whitehead to the Leader of the Council

The Local Government Act 2000 provides that where authorities operate executive arrangements, for instance where there is a Leader and Cabinet, or Mayor and Cabinet, then all functions are to be exercised by the executive unless specified otherwise by the Act or enactments or regulations made under it.

The Regulations define non-executive functions. These functions, which include setting the budget and strategic policy framework are reserved for the full Council, rather than the executive. This separation ensures that decisions which significantly impact the community or require a high degree of scrutiny are handled transparently and with greater accountability.

The regulations delineate that strategic and quasi-judicial decisions should be reserved for the full Council. This ensures that decisions which have significant consequences receive the necessary scrutiny and democratic legitimacy. Despite the executive's day-to-day management role, the overarching financial strategies and significant amendments to these strategies must be considered by the full Council to align with the broader governance framework and financial health of the council.

The recent decisions on the use of a huge amount of CIL monies for developments at South Woodham Ferrers and at Cabinet last week for £66.3M at the Beaulieu sites – as detailed in the decisions published on the City Council's Website – are clearly 'Strategic Policy Decisions' and in the opinion of the Conservative Group should have been taken at Full Council.

The Council's Constitution is being updated, but will the Leader now agree that the decision to fund the viability gap and fund infrastructure should be brought to Council?

Does he further consider that ring-fencing money for Property Developers in these developments is not what CIL should be used for as other parts of the City will lose out?

5. Question from Councillor D Clark to the Cabinet Member for a Safer Chelmsford

In a judgment delivered on 16 April 2025, the UK Supreme Court ruled that the protected characteristic of “sex” in the Equality Act 2010 refers to biological sex, not acquired gender or legal sex recognised through a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)

What action has the Council taken to ensure that their staff feel supported as a result of this decision?
