

MINUTES

of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 14 September 2026 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor J. Jeapes (Chair)
Councillor L. Mascot (Vice-Chair)

Councillors,
Councillors, D. Clark, S. Davis, D. Eley, A. Sosin, J. Sosin, M. Steel, S. Sullivan, A. Thompson,
and P. Wilson

Also in attendance:
Councillor C. Davidson, Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor N. Dudley, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Councillor S. Simon, Deputy Cabinet Member for Cleaner Communities

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors P. Davey and R. Whitehead.

2. Chairs Announcements

No announcements were made for this meeting.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on 29th June 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Decisions and Action Sheet

The Committee considered and noted the decision and action sheet since the last meeting on 29 June 2026.

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

There were no public questions.

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 Finance

The Committee received a presentation from Cabinet member for Finance.

Councillor Davidson informed the Committee that the Council's financial position for 2026/27 had been stronger than anticipated due to a more favourable Government funding than had been expected. As a result, the budget approved earlier in the year had included investment in service improvements such as additional dog bins and the Street Care Rangers service. Members were advised that further work had been undertaken during the year to identify additional service improvements and that these would be brought forward through supplementary estimates.

The Committee heard that proposed investments included additional Community Protection Officers, increased staffing to support the ongoing success of the theatre, improvements to council car parks, additional planning resources to help accelerate housing delivery and affordable housing developments, enhanced planning enforcement capacity, measures to reduce the use of temporary accommodation, increased work on housing standards and additional grant funding to support local businesses.

Councillor Davidson also updated Members on Local Government Reorganisation. He expressed disappointment regarding the Government's recent announcement concerning reorganisation proposals and stated that significant officer time and resources had been invested in preparing the Council's submission. Members were advised that a £6 million reserve had previously been established to meet costs associated with Local Government Reorganisation and that discussions were ongoing regarding costs already incurred and the implications of the Government's revised position.

Questions were raised regarding the financial impact of Local Government Reorganisation, future investment priorities and the use of the Local Government Reorganisation reserve. Members discussed the opportunity costs associated with officer time spent preparing for reorganisation and acknowledged the considerable additional workload undertaken by officers whilst continuing to deliver normal council services. The Committee thanked officers for their efforts during the process.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

(7.04pm to 7.23pm)

9. Fly-Tipping and Waste Enforcement – Inform and Debate

The Committee received a presentation from the Public Health and Protection Services Manager.

Members were advised that fly-tipping remained a significant issue nationally, with the majority of incidents involving household waste. The distinction between littering and fly-tipping was explained, together with the enforcement powers available to the Council under environmental legislation. The Committee heard that reports were primarily

received online and were reviewed by officers within the Community Protection Team, whilst Street Care staff were responsible for the removal of waste from Council land and adopted highways.

The Committee was informed that Community Protection Officers investigated reported incidents, gathering evidence from the waste itself, witness statements and any available CCTV footage. Where sufficient evidence existed, individuals could be invited to attend an interview under caution before enforcement options were considered. Members heard that enforcement outcomes could include fixed penalty notices, written warnings, simple cautions or prosecution proceedings.

Members noted that benchmarking information showed significant differences between local authorities in terms of enforcement activity. It was explained that some authorities used private contractors and issued substantially larger numbers of fixed penalty notices, although many of those notices were not paid and were not pursued through the courts. Officers advised that the Council's approach sought to balance enforcement with education and behaviour change.

The Committee heard that two additional Community Protection Officers would be recruited, increasing the Council's capacity to investigate fly-tipping and undertake educational campaigns. Members were also advised of ongoing discussions with Essex County Council and neighbouring authorities regarding a more coordinated Essex-wide approach to tackling fly-tipping.

Questions were raised regarding incidents occurring on private land, particularly within newer housing developments, and the responsibilities of management companies. Officers explained that the Council would work with landowners to encourage prompt removal of waste and identify opportunities for enforcement action where appropriate.

Members welcomed the introduction of warning signage and tape around fly-tipping incidents during investigations, noting that this demonstrated action was being taken and acted as a visible deterrent. Further discussion took place regarding household duty of care responsibilities, the importance of public awareness campaigns and the need to ensure residents used licensed waste carriers when arranging waste disposal.

Questions were also raised regarding the evidential threshold required for enforcement action, the use of witness and CCTV evidence, and the impact of Essex County Council's booking system for household waste recycling centres. Officers advised that, whilst there was no clear evidence that the booking system had directly increased fly-tipping levels, practical experience suggested that restrictions at recycling centres could contribute to some incidents.

The Committee thanked officers for the report and welcomed the ongoing work being undertaken to address fly-tipping and littering across the district.

It was **RESOLVED** that presentation be noted.

(7.23pm to 7.49pm)

10. Updates from Outside Representative Bodies (2025/26)

The Committee received updates from Members appointed to outside bodies following Annual Council in May 2025.

Members noted that a number of reports had now been received. Concern was expressed that several outside bodies appeared not to have held meetings for a considerable period of time, despite attempts by appointed councillors to establish contact. It was suggested that enquiries be made to determine whether those organisations remained active and whether Council representation remained appropriate.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

(7.49pm to 7.51pm)

11. Chair and Vice-Chair Update

The Chair and Vice-Chair updated the Committee on discussions regarding the future development of the Overview and Scrutiny function.

Members were advised that consideration had been given to adopting a more focused approach to scrutiny. Rather than relying on lengthy portfolio presentations, the intention would be for Members to identify specific issues and themes in advance so that deeper questioning and examination could take place during meetings. This would allow the Committee to devote greater attention to areas of concern and scrutiny rather than receiving general updates.

The Committee also discussed the importance of Members suggesting future topics for review and contributing actively to the development of the work programme. Reference was made to partnership working and issues where responsibility was shared across a number of organisations. Potential topics identified included community safety, support for victims of domestic abuse, waterways, sewage discharges, water quality and infrastructure capacity.

Members broadly supported the proposed approach and were encouraged to submit suggestions for future scrutiny topics and areas of focus ahead of meetings.

(7.51pm to 7.59pm)

12. Work Programme

The Committee considered the updated work programme.

Members were advised that future portfolio updates would be more focused on specific topics identified by the Committee in advance. It was suggested that upcoming presentations from the Cabinet Members for Fair Chelmsford and Planning and Place Shaping should concentrate on areas of particular interest to Members rather than providing general portfolio updates.

The Committee also discussed the forthcoming presentation from the Police and agreed that particular emphasis should be placed on domestic abuse, community safety and the Council's role in supporting victims.

Members were encouraged to submit suggestions for future scrutiny topics and areas of focus directly to officers, the Chair and the Vice-Chair in advance of meetings.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

(8.00pm to 8.02pm)

13. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.03pm

Chair