

MINUTES

of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 17 November 2025 at 8pm

Present:

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

Councillors, D. Clark, H. Clark, S. Manley, M. Steel, S. Sullivan and S. Young.

Also in attendance –

Councillor Lynne Foster

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors Adutwim, Bugbee, Davey, Davis, Dobson and Mascot.

Cllr Manley and Young were substitute for Cllrs Adutwim and Cllr Mascot respectively.

2. Chairs Announcements

No announcements were made for this meeting.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2025 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 15th September 2025. It was noted that a training session had now been provisionally completed with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

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 public questions had been submitted for the meeting.

7. Decisions Called-In

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

8. Cabinet Portfolio Update from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Fairer Chelmsford

The Committee received a presentation from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Fairer Chelmsford on housing and homelessness, highlighting the significant rise in temporary accommodation since 2019/20 and the corresponding decline in new lets and affordable housing completions. It was noted that the number of households on the Housing Register had increased from 1,123 in March 2023 to over 2,000, with most applicants in high-need bands. The Council continued to pursue 35% affordable housing on qualifying developments and had secured funding for 23 family-sized homes through the Local Authority Housing Fund, 24 units under the Chess scheme, and 22 modular homes at Meteor Way. Construction was due to start on 15 affordable homes at George Street, and additional schemes such as Pym's Road were expected to provide further capacity. The Council had also stepped in to fund supported housing following the withdrawal of County Council funding, maintaining 100 units with plans for 33 more in 2025/26.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the George Street homes would include family-sized units. Members expressed concern about the growing demand for temporary accommodation and discussed measures to encourage downsizing among under-occupiers, noting that financial incentives were limited and that the Council was exploring options. Officers explained that London boroughs were using accommodation in Chelmsford due to severe shortages locally, but it was shared that the accommodation that the London boroughs were using were not adequate for the statutory standards at Chelmsford. The Committee acknowledged the challenges posed by national housing trends and economic conditions but noted the proactive steps being taken to secure funding and accelerate delivery.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Portfolio Update from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Fairer Chelmsford be noted.

(8.00pm to 8.11pm)

9. Annual Report on Housing Delivery

The Committee received the Annual Housing Delivery Monitoring Report for 2024/25, which provided an update on completions, pipeline supply, and national and local initiatives affecting housing delivery. It was noted that overall housing completions had decreased by 19% locally compared to 5% nationally, reflecting a slowdown in major applications and pre-application enquiries. The report highlighted that 11,571 dwellings were included within major planning applications yet to be determined, including strategic sites at Chelmsford Garden Community and Broomfield. Members were advised that

recent delays were largely due to Section 106 negotiations and external factors such as the A12 scheme cancellation, which had impacted progress on key sites.

The Committee discussed the need to accelerate delivery and expressed concern about the lack of momentum on strategic sites. Officers explained that developers were cautious due to market conditions, mortgage availability, and the removal of Help to Buy, but confirmed that measures were being taken to streamline Section 106 agreements and improve monitoring of site progress. It was noted that the Council was profiling lead in and built out time by developers/different scales of development and reviewing masterplanning processes to shorten lead-in times, while continuing to pursue affordable housing targets and explore smaller, more agile sites in the Local Plan review.

Members requested that the lead in and build out rates monitoring information and progress on existing sites be reported back to the Committee in April 2026 showing progress on strategic sites, including planning permissions granted, Section 106 completions, and starts on site.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(8:12pm to 8:57 pm)

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

The Committee received a report summarising the decisions taken under delegation to the Chief Executive. One decision had been taken during the period 30 September to 31 October 2025.

The committee was informed that during this period there had been one decision taken under delegation to the Chief Executive during this period relating to the purchase of properties.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

11. Work Programme

The Committee considered the updated work programme and noted that future items would include Cabinet portfolio updates and a review of the project management toolkit. Members agreed that a review of customer services was to be added to the April 2026 meeting, with terms of reference agreed outside the meeting. It was also suggested that housing issues return for further scrutiny due to their impact on the Council's budget and service delivery.

It was requested that progress on accelerating housing delivery and strategic sites be monitored and reported back in a timely manner, ideally before decisions on the new Local Plan. Officers confirmed that the Housing Delivery Group report, including data on planning permissions, Section 106 agreements, and site starts, would be presented at the April 2026 meeting alongside the Cabinet Member update. This would provide transparency on actions taken to improve delivery and inform future planning decisions.

RESOLVED that;

1. the work programme be noted and
2. where possible for future meetings, that presentations would be circulated just prior to a meeting.

12. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.17pm

Chair