

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda



29th June 2026 at 7pm

**Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Duke Street,
Chelmsford, CM1 1JE**

Membership

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

and Councillors

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

Local people are welcome to attend this meeting, where your elected Councillors take decisions affecting YOU and your City. There will also be an opportunity to ask your Councillors questions or make a statement. These have to be submitted in advance to committees@chelmsford.gov.uk. Further details are on the agenda page. If you would like to find out more, please email committees@chelmsford.gov.uk or phone the Democracy Team on Chelmsford (01245) 606480.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

29 June 2026

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

2. Chairs Announcements

3. Minutes

To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2026.

4. Decision and Action Sheet

To consider the decisions and actions from the previous minutes of the 12 March 2026 meeting.

5. 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.

6. 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 20 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 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.

7. Decisions Called-In

To report on any Cabinet decisions called in and to decide how they should be progressed.

8. Cabinet Portfolio Update from the Cabinet member for a Connected Chelmsford

9. Customer Service Centre – Inform and Debate

10. Annual Report of the Committee (2025/26)

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

12. Work Programme

13. 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
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 12 March 2026 at 7pm

Present:

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

Councillors,
Councillors, C. Adutwim, H. Clark, P. Davey, L. Mascot, S. Sullivan, P. Wilson, R. Whitehead,
K. Franks

Also in attendance:
Councillor S. Goldman, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property
Councillor C. Davidson, Cabinet Member for Finance

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors N. Bugbee, D. Clark, S. Davis, S. Dobson and M. Steel.

Councillor K. Franks substituted for Councillor N. Bugbee, and Councillor R. Whitehead substituted for Councillor S. Dobson.

2. Chairs Announcements

No announcements were made for this meeting.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on 9th February 2026 and 16th February 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

4. 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.

5. Public Question Time

One public question had been submitted in advance of the meeting, which was asked in person and [can be seen via this link](#).

The question related to concerns around; the significant increase in fly-tipping incidents across the city, the low level of enforcement action being taken, and the associated financial pressures on the Council. The question also asked what steps the Council intended to take to strengthen enforcement and whether the Committee would consider reviewing the effectiveness of the current policy as part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.

In response to the question, it was explained that a written response was to be provided from the Cabinet Member for Safer Chelmsford.

The Committee agreed that an item would be added to the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.

6. Decisions Called-In

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

7. Chelmer Waterside – Inform and Debate

The Chair summarised the background for the request of the inform and debate and explained that the meeting had been convened to establish the original project objectives, the associated costs and the delivery timelines from the beginning of the scheme through to the present. She stated that Chelmer Waterside had been one of the Council's major long-term objectives for more than thirty years and that, although the Committee would not revisit the entire history, the focus would be on the more recent developments that had led to the current delays in delivering the project.

The Chair clarified that the session was aimed to explore the cost and best-value issues tied to the regeneration project, including infrastructure requirements such as bow bridge. Members were reminded that the scope of the discussion had been set out in the documents circulated in advance and that some subjects could not be examined in detail due to commercially sensitive matters relating to ongoing procurement activities.

The Economic Development and Implementation Services Manager provided an overview of the project, explaining that the Chelmer Waterside project had been ongoing for over thirty years and that the chronology demonstrated how long the redevelopment had been an objective of the Council. Members were informed that national policy continued to prioritise brownfield development, although such sites were complex and costly. It was noted that Waterside was the largest and most challenging brownfield area in the city and that the adopted Local Plan identified it for development. Members were informed that delivering the site had always required major infrastructure including Bow Bridge, land remediation and relocation of the gas mains. It was explained that the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) had enabled the Council to progress this work and that much of the infrastructure was now close to completion.

Members commented that the chronology was useful but expressed that some information had not been included. Members shared that, although everyone wished to see the development delivered, issues such as the sewer running across the site, earlier proposals for a canal cut and delays that could extend progress to 2029 remained a concern. It was further noted that significant sums had already been invested and that clarity was sought on the rationale behind earlier decisions. Members also highlighted that different administrations had taken different approaches to the site and commented that an

alternative approach would have been to sell the land and allow the market to lead delivery, questioning why this option had not been pursued.

In response to questions, it was explained that:

- the sewer constraint had been accounted for in the Chelmer Waterside Development Framework.
- the canal cut proposal was incompatible with the design of the new bridge, although the bridge provided capacity for future navigation if required.
- the Council's current approach followed the Housing Infrastructure Fund agreement, which required the Council to deliver both the infrastructure and the housing it enabled.
- the rationale for retaining control of the land was linked to securing affordable housing and place shaping, as viability negotiations could otherwise reduce provision.
- the Homes England recovery mechanism related to the reinvestment of funding to support further housing delivery. It was noted that the HIF funding agreement was entered into in different economic conditions.
- the contract also included a clawback provision should the Council fail to deliver the wider project within agreed milestones.
- much of the enabling infrastructure was now complete or nearing completion, including Bow Bridge, first phases of land remediation and the relocation of the gas pressure reduction works.
- some matters, including valuations, could not be discussed due to the live procurement process.
- in regard to funding, Members were informed that HIF funding was made available only to local authorities and that accepting it placed responsibility on the Council to deliver the required infrastructure.
- in regard to contributions, Members were informed that section 106 and CIL payments also formed part of the funding package.
- in regard to the total HIF received, Members were informed that funding had been awarded in three phases, increasing as Homes England recognised the additional housing capacity unlocked by relocating the gas mains.
- in regard to milestones, Members were informed that the Homes England agreement contained approximately forty milestones, with the end date as defined in the contract currently extending to 31st March 2034.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property commented that earlier proposals were not relevant to the current circumstances and that the option of selling the land had already been debated at Council and Cabinet. Members also noted the impact of national construction delays and wider economic pressures on the scheme. It was further remarked that the importance of securing high-quality development, rather than schemes led solely by developer priorities, should remain central to the approach.

Members expressed their thanks to officers for their ongoing work and noted that the chronology had been helpful in understanding the project's progression.

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

(7.02pm to 8.20pm)

8. Work Programme

The Committee considered the updated work programme and noted future items.

It was explained that the 'Housing Update' was to be added to the June 2026 meeting as it was removed from the Work Programme following the cancellation of the April 2026 meeting.

Following a public question raised at this meeting, an item on Fly-Tipping in Chelmsford was to be added to the future programme of work pending agreement from the Committee.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted and updated accordingly.

9. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.23pm

Chair



Chelmsford City Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

29th June 2026

Customer Services - Inform and Debate

Report by:

Director of Connected Chelmsford

Officer Contact:

Ali Naqvi – Marketing and Customer Services Manager,
ali.naqvi@chelmsford.gov.uk

Purpose

To receive a presentation on the progress and processes of the Customer Service Centre as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation

That the content of the presentation be noted.

List of appendices:

N/A

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: This report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee enables the Committee to fulfil its function per section 3.2.3(e) of the Constitution “*to oversee the proper and efficient administration of the Council; and review the effectiveness of the Council’s work and services*”.

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: Impact assessment not required.

Health and Safety: None.

Digital: None.

Other: None.

Consultees:

None.



Chelmsford City Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

29th June 2026

Annual Report on the Overview & Scrutiny Function 2025/26

Report by:

Director of Connected Chelmsford

Officer Contact:

Freddey Banks-Ayres, Democratic Services Officer, email: Freddey.banks-ayres@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel: 01245 606621

Purpose

To report on the activity of the scrutiny function of the Council for 2025/26, 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.

Recommendations

That the Council be recommended to approve the Committee's Annual Report on the Scrutiny function for 2025/26 for subsequent publication.

1. Background Information

- 1.1. The Local Code of Corporate Governance was adopted by the Council on 23rd April 2008 (m6. 1, CL52,2008). Under the Code's Core Principle 6 – Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

– the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to produce an annual report on its work for consideration by the Council and subsequent publication.

1.2. The Committee's Annual Report on the Scrutiny Function for 2025/26 is attached at Appendix 1 to this report and covers the following matters: -

- Statutory provisions
- Terms of reference
- Membership
- Publication of information
- Work undertaken in 2025/26
- Future work for 2026/27
- "Call In" of Cabinet decisions
- Training and Development

2. Conclusion

2.1. Members are asked to recommend to Council that it approves the Committee's Annual Report for subsequent publication.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Annual Report on the Scrutiny Function 2025/26

Background papers:

Nil

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

Consultees:

Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Local Code of Corporate Governance



**CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT ON THE SCRUTINY
FUNCTION
2025/26**

**Councillor J. Jeapes
(Chair – Overview and Scrutiny Committee)**

www.chelmsford.gov.uk

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Background

(a) *Statutory Provisions*

Under the Local Government Act 2000 each local authority is required to establish at least one committee to review or scrutinise decisions taken by the Executive or any other part of the council and make reports to the council or to the cabinet. It can also report on any matters that affect the authority's area or its inhabitants. Its role includes both developing and reviewing policy and holding the Executive to account. The Committee has power to require Cabinet members and officers to attend before it to answer questions and it may also invite other people to attend its meetings.

Chelmsford Council chose, in 2005, to set up a single Scrutiny Committee. The Committee's first meeting was on 23rd May, 2005. It was later renamed the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Council on 10th May, 2006.

New legislation came into effect in 2009 which placed additional duties on the Council and in respect of which it was required to make arrangements for their discharge. The legislation concerned was:

- The Police and Justice Act 2006 (Sections 19 -21), which placed a duty on all local authorities to scrutinise the activities of organisations comprising the local crime and disorder reduction partnership, and
- Section 119 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which allowed councillors to ask for discussions to take place at an overview and scrutiny committee on issues of neighbourhood concern.

In December 2009 the Council agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee take responsibility for those functions and that its terms of reference were amended accordingly.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (Commencement No. 3) Order 2010 brought into force on 15th June 2010 the requirement for local authorities to have a scheme for responding to petitions from people who live, work or study in the area. Petition organisers who are dissatisfied with the Council's response can ask for a review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A report on this matter was agreed by Cabinet on 8 June and Council on 9 June 2010 and the Committee's terms of reference were again amended to reflect this additional function.

(b) *Terms of Reference*

The Terms of Reference of the Committee are contained in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution. They are as follows –

General role

To act as a channel for public involvement in the activities of the Council and other bodies operating in the City; to oversee the proper and efficient administration of the Council; to review the effectiveness of its work and services; and to support and

complement the activities of the Cabinet, whilst at the same time scrutinising them and offering constructive comment or advice where appropriate.

Specific role

- monitor the performance of the Council's services, carry out detailed reviews of them where considered necessary and report any resulting recommendations to the Cabinet;
- review the decisions, decision-making processes and activities of the Cabinet, other Council bodies and in respect of the Committee's own work to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Constitution and the policies of the Council;
- monitor the activities and performance of external bodies, liaising with them where necessary, and carry out detailed assessments of the effectiveness of services provided by them if any apparent shortcomings are identified;
- scrutinise the work of the community safety partnership (Safer Chelmsford) and the partners who comprise it, insofar as their activities relate to the partnership itself and exercise all the other functions of a crime and disorder committee pursuant to Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006;
- consider Councillor Call for Action requests following agreement by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee after consultation with the Director of Corporate Services
- consider and respond to petitions, requesting that officers appear before the Committee to answer questions on functions, services or decisions for which they are responsible
- review the Council's handling of or responses to petitions where the petition organiser is dissatisfied with the action taken.

The Committee will also be responsible for

- providing opportunities for officers to acquaint members with the operation of the Council.

(c) Membership of the Committee

The Committee had 13 members, all Members of Chelmsford City Council. They are appointed by the full Council at its Annual Meeting in May of each year on a proportionality basis. No member of the Cabinet may be a member of the Committee.

In 2025/26 the membership of the Committee comprised the following members:

LD Councillors C. Adutwim, N. Bugbee (until March 2026), D. Clark, H. Clark, P. Davey, L. Mascot and A. Thompson (Vice Chair)

CON Councillors S. Dobson, J. Jeapes (Chair), M. Steel, S. Sullivan and P. Wilson

IND Councillor S. Davis

Following the Annual Council Meeting on 13th May 2026, the membership is as follows –

The Committee is currently chaired by Councillor J. Jeapes who is a member of the Opposition group on the Council (the Conservatives).

- LD Councillors D. Clark, P. Davey, D. Eley, L. Mascot (Vice Chair), A. Sosin, J. Sosin and A. Thompson
- CON Councillors J. Jeapes (Chair), M. Steel, S. Sullivan, R. Whitehead and P. Wilson
- IND Councillor S. Davis

(d) Programme of Meetings

The Committee met on five occasions in the municipal year 2025/26. It has five meetings programmed for 2026/27. Additional meetings may be arranged as required, including any which may be necessary if any decisions of the Cabinet become subject to the ‘Call In’ procedure mentioned in Part 3 of this Report.

(e) Publication of Information

The agendas for the Committee’s meetings are published on the Council’s website not later than five clear days before the date of each meeting. The minutes of each meeting are also published on the website as soon as possible after each meeting has taken place.

Work Programme 2025-26

The main areas of activity considered by the Committee during the municipal year (May to May) 2025/26 were as follows –

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date(s) considered</u>
Cabinet Portfolio Update from the Cabinet Member for Finance	15 September 2025
Cabinet Portfolio Update from the Cabinet Member for an Active Chelmsford	15 September 2025
Theatre Inform and Debate	15 September 2025
Cabinet Portfolio Update from the Leader of the Council	15 September 2025
Update/Review of “Our Chelmsford, Our Plan”	15 September 2025
Report on Decisions Taken Under Delegation to the Chief Executive	15 September 2025
Annual Report of the Committee (2024/25)	15 September 2025
Cabinet Portfolio Update from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for a Fairer Chelmsford	17 November 2025

Annual Report on Housing Delivery	17 November 2025
Report on Decisions Taken Under Delegation to the Chief Executive	17 November 2025
Cabinet Portfolio Update for Safer Chelmsford	09 February 2026
Annual Presentation by Safer Chelmsford Partnership and Essex Police	09 February 2026
Call-In Decision: Community Infrastructure Levy – Governance Update	16 February 2026
Chelmer Waterside – Inform and Debate	12 March 2026

The work programme functions on a rolling basis with standard items being the following;

- Cabinet Member Portfolios (including the Annual Report on Housing Delivery) – items were presented every Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings and this is to meet the requirements on the Local Government Act 2000 to scrutinise functions of the executive.
- Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny Committee – this item would normally be considered at July Full Council along with the Annual Reports for Governance and Audit & Risk Committees, but this year due to the timetable will be considered at December Full Council
- Report on Decisions Taken under Delegation to the Chief Executive – it is a requirement for the Overview and Committee Scrutiny to consider and note any urgent decisions that were taken under the delegation to the CEO. This is reported bi-annually.

The minutes of the Committee meetings for this municipal year can be accessed below:

- Minutes of the meeting on [15th September 2025](#)
- Minutes of the meeting on [17th November 2025](#);
- Minutes of the meeting on [9th February 2026](#);
- Minutes of the meeting on [16th February 2026](#), and
- Minutes of the meeting on [12th March 2026](#).

Task and Finish Groups

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee form small “Task and Finish” groups to look into a particular subject or service where appropriate. They work with officers to find out more about the service area and to identify possible improvements. They attend site visits, forums and meetings and undertake research as necessary in order to obtain further understanding and information to support the review. Their findings are fed back to the rest of the Committee in the form of a report and recommendations. In addition to ensuring value for money and that things are done correctly, ‘Task and Finish’ groups provide excellent development opportunities for Members, help to maintain good Member/Officer relations, raise awareness of issues and services amongst Members and can identify gaps in Member training.

During 2025-26, there were no Task & Finish Group undertaken.

‘Call-in’ of Cabinet Decisions

This Council’s Executive Arrangements, made under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, provide an opportunity for Members to require that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review a decision taken by the Executive (Cabinet) but not yet implemented. Depending on its conclusion, that Committee could then request that the Cabinet reconsider, and possibly amend, that decision.

The procedure for “calling in” Cabinet decisions is set out in the Council’s Constitution (Part 4.5 – Overview and Scrutiny Rules – Rule 4.5.11). In brief this provides that at least five Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must request the call-in in writing, setting out their reasons, and the request must be received by the Council’s Legal and Democratic Services Manager by 5 p.m. on the fourth working day after the Cabinet decision was taken.

During 2025-26, one Cabinet decision had been called in regarding [the decision taken in regard to Community Infrastructure Levy](#). The Cabinet decision was upheld by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Future Projects

The Committee keeps its work programme under constant review. The work programme is considered at the end of each meeting.

Training and Development

There were no training sessions for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2025-26.



Chelmsford City Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

29th June 2026

Report on Decisions Taken Under Delegation to the Chief Executive

Report by:

Director of Connected Chelmsford

Officer Contact:

Freddey Banks-Ayres, Democratic Services Officer, email: Freddey.banks-ayres@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel: 01245 606621

Purpose

To report on the decisions taken under delegation to the Chief Executive for the period 1 February 2025 to 31 May 2026.

Recommendations

That the report be noted.

1. Background

- 1.1. The Constitution of the Council includes, at Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions), details of matters on which the officers of the Council are authorised to take decisions. These are known as delegations to officers and among them is the following, which is delegated to the Chief Executive:

“Deal with any matter on grounds of urgency, following consultation with the Leader of the Council or the Chair and Vice Chair of the appropriate Committee in respect of non-executive matters.

- 1.2. The decisions taken by the Chief Executive under this delegation are recorded and notified to the public and members of the Council by publication on the

Council's website. On 8 February 2010, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that a list of those decisions should also be brought to the Committee for information in June and November each year.

2. Latest Decisions

2.1. Five decisions were taken under delegation to the Chief Executive during the period 1 February 2025 to 31 May 2026. The summary of the decisions are attached as appendix 1 to this report.

2.2. Members are asked to note the content of the report.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Decisions taken under delegation to the Chief Executive for the period 1 February 2025 to 31 May 2026.

Background papers: Nil

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: The Committee are required to be notified of urgent decisions.

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:

Director of Connected Chelmsford

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

None relevant

DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATION TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Subject: Urgency Pay Award

Date of Decision: 29.8.25

Decision Number:

3/2025

Background:

A further pay award of 0.5% above the initial 3% pay award, has been negotiated with Unison and accepted by staff. A one-off unconsolidated pay award of £200 has also been agreed for all permanent staff.

In April 2025 a 3% pay award was implemented for staff but with the 5 lowest scale points being restructured to provide an additional uplift beyond this (range of 3-7%). There was a commitment to review this once the national pay award was finalised. Following the announcement of a 3.2% national pay award, it has been agreed for the further 0.5% to be offered to Council staff.

Chelmsford City Council has for a number of years adopted local pay and conditions and consulted with regional Unison in this regard.

A pay award has been negotiated and agreed for Council staff, this means the Council's pay scales have increased by a further 0.5%. This pay increase will be effective from 1st September 2025. Additionally, staff will receive a one-off £200 lump sum payment.

The total cost of the pay award will be approximately £270k. the one-off element being approximately £180k and the ongoing 0.5% element being £90k over the current approved budget.

Decision and Reasons for Urgency:

The Chief Executive decided to exercise their delegated authority to take urgent decisions and authorise the increase in the revenue budget. They did so on the grounds that there was an urgent need to pay staff the pay award in their September 2025 salaries.

Supporting Information:

The Leader of the Council was consulted before taking the decision and had no objection to it.

DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATION TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Subject:

Property Purchases

Date of Decision:

31st October 2025

Decision Number:

4/2025

Background:

At the Cabinet meeting held on 10 September 2025, Members agreed to support the purchase of two properties located within the City Centre. Cabinet also resolved that Officers should seek the necessary budget allocations through the Chief Executive's Urgency Powers.

The first property is a block of flats and purchase will boost the Council's temporary and supported accommodation capacity and requires a budget allocation of £7.65m. This is to be supplemented by a grant of £2.25m from Homes England toward funding this purchase, receivable early next financial year, reducing the net cost to the Council. The condition of the grant funding award was that the Council make a contribution of £825k towards the purchase from the S106 contributions collected. The remaining funding will be reviewed as part of the budget setting process, including review of the existing capital budget of £4.51m for housing initiatives, with savings to be sought to partially offset the cost of the proposal.

The second Purchase is a centrally located Car Park that gives the Council control of a strategic asset in the City Centre and requires a budget allocation of £4.035m. The Council is required to pay a deposit of £25k, but the completion of this purchase will be delayed until the current management agreement expiry, to May 2026.

Supporting Information:

The Leader of the Council and the Mayor were consulted before making this decision and had no objection to it.

DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATION TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Subject:

Business Rates Pooling and Pilot for Non-Domestic Rates in 2026-27

Date of Decision:

24th November 2025

Decision Number:

5/2025

Background:

Business Retention scheme

In April 2013 the Government introduced a business rates retention scheme intended to create incentives for local authorities to promote business growth over the long term. Under the scheme local authorities are allowed to retain some of the benefit from any growth in non-domestic rates; however, they are exposed to the risk of reduced income from any reduction in the amounts of Rates collected.

If an authority collects more business rates than the Government has determined it needs to fund their services (business rates baseline funding) then these authorities are required to pay the excess to Central Government in the form of a tariff. Conversely, if an authority's funding requirement is higher than income collected, then they will receive a "top-up" from central government.

There are changes due to start in 2026/27 which are discussed below. The main impact is that growth will be measured against a new April 2026 baseline resulting in lower income to the Council.

There is a levy mechanism built into the Business Rates Retention regime, so that authorities will pay a proportion of their growth to Central Government. The levy rate has been lowered from the 50% in previous years, so the Council will lose a lower proportion of any growth, as shown on the next page.

Stage	Business rates retention income as a % of a local authorities' Baseline Funding Level	Levy rate charged on business rates retention income over Baseline Funding Level
1. Initial growth	100% - 110%	10%
2. Further growth	110% - 200%	30%
3. High growth	200%+	45%

The Government has put in place a new protection for local authorities from significant negative shocks to their income by guaranteeing that no authority will see its income from business rates fall below the safety net. The new safety net will be set 100% for 2026/27 (there will be no losses), 2027/28 it will move to 97% and to a final rate of 92.5% in 2028/29.

There is insufficient information on new business rates to make any robust estimates at a local level.

Business Rates Pooling

As part of the rates retention scheme, authorities can formally seek designation as a pool. The pool will be formed of two or more authorities. Under the previous rules those authorities would retain a higher percentage of business rate growth by reducing or removing the levy that needs to be paid on any income growth. However, from 2026/27 the marginal levy structure identified above will be applied to pools. Under the levy structure local authorities that pool could still be better off collectively. This is because the pool would group their retained rates income and their collective BFL to be treated as one local authority. This is a change to the current system where local authorities who pool together have a specific levy rate allocated for the pool as a whole.

With a 100% safety net for pools there would seem to be no risk, however, safety net payments for pooling authorities would first need to be paid from the growth of others in the pool (if the pool was above baseline) thereby likely reducing the resources retained locally in overall terms, particularly when growth is unlikely to be more than 10% above baseline funding, due to the reset.

The deadline for local authorities to request pooling arrangements for 2026-27 is Monday 24 November 2025. After the notification of designation of the pool is provided at the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, a request can be made to revoke the pool in its entirety within 28 days. The membership of a pool cannot be amended i.e. a single authority cannot leave the pool; it can only be revoked in its entirety.

Chelmsford's options for 2026/27

There is insufficient information to estimate monetary gains or losses, so options are not costed. It should be noted that there is no evidence to expect any significant growth in business rate taxbase in 2026/27 in Essex region. In such circumstances it is not possible to fully assess risk and reward from pool membership.

Option 1

Notify the lead authority of the intention to leave the Essex Business rates pool and continue as a standalone authority.

- This would provide certainty that there will be no loss
- Gains are unlikely to be of significant value in the Essex Pool due to reset baseline (inclusion of only 1 year of possible growth)

Option 2

Join the Essex business rates pool for another year.

- This could provide an unknown quantity of additional income if the pool grows faster than Chelmsford own rates income
- There is a risk of loss if the Council belongs to pool.

Decision and Reasons for Urgency:

The government provided guidance on the new pool rules in the week of the 17th November. The Chief Executive was of the view that option 1 would be of most benefit to the Council. As a decision on whether to join the Pool needed to be made by 24th November 2025, they agreed to exercise their delegated authority to take urgent decisions and authorised the Accountancy Services Manager to notify the Lead Authority of the intention to leave the Essex Business Pool and continue as a standalone authority.

Supporting Information:

The Leader of the Council was consulted before making this decision and had no objection to it.

DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATION TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Subject:

1 Springfield Lyons Approach

Date of Decision:

6th February 2026

Decision Number:

1/2026

Background:

At its meeting on 8 April 2025, Cabinet approved the allocation of £2.95m to support the refurbishment and future letting of 1 Springfield Lyons Approach, following the expiry of the former tenant's lease.

Since that decision, the Council has undertaken initial enabling works to clear the building in preparation for refurbishment. These works have now been completed at an approximate cost of £200,000.

Subsequently, the Council received an approach from the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust, and terms have now been agreed for them to lease the entire building. The proposed lease is for a 25-year term.

Under the agreed heads of terms, the Trust will take the property in its current, un-refurbished condition. In return, the Council will provide a rent-free period and a capital contribution toward the Trust's fit-out works.

The Ambulance Service has indicated a strong desire to progress with the lease and has requested completion of all documentation as soon as possible

To facilitate this letting, we are recommending that the capital budget previously allocated for refurbishment be used to fund the Council's capital contribution to the Trust, and that the Council grants a new lease to the Trust.

Supporting Information:

The Leader of the Council was consulted before making this decision and had no objection to it.

DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATION TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Subject:

Discretionary Rate Relief Policy 2026/27

Date of Decision:

17th March 2026

Decision Number:

2/2026

Background:

The Council has a policy relating to discretionary rate reliefs for business. Some elements of the policy are decisions made by the Council. Other elements are items that the Government requests that Councils add to their discretionary policies in order to give effect to budgetary policy decisions, which Government does not have time to enact via legislation. Changes to the policy require Council agreement before the start of each financial year.

The proposed policy for 2026/27 policy contains no changes to the Council's own discretionary relief choices, However, it does contain changes to the Government's elements to give effect to Supporting Small Business Relief (2026/27 to 2028/29), Pubs and Live Music Venues Relief (2026/2027) and Film Studio Relief (to 2033/34). The cost of these reliefs will be fully funded by the Government. The proposed policy is detailed at Appendix A.

Following the cancellation of the Cabinet meeting on 17th March 2026, there is no mechanism other than the Chief Executive's Urgency powers to give effect to the policy in time for it to be effective for the 2026/27 financial year and therefore urgency powers were utilised to ensure the Council's acceptance of the policy.

Supporting Information:

The Leader of the Council and Leaders of the Council's opposition parties have been consulted and neither had any objection to the contents of the policy.

APPENDIX A**CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL'S DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY 2026/2027****PART A**1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 allows Local Authorities to award discretionary rate relief to a range of organisations, including charities, Community Amateur Sports Clubs and other non-profit making bodies.
- 1.2 In the case of charities, the ratepayer must be a charity or trustee for a charity and the property must be wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. Mandatory relief of 80% will be given in such cases, where not excluded by legislation, and such qualifying charities can also receive up to a further 20% discretionary relief.
- 1.3 In the case of Community Amateur Sports Clubs, these must be registered with HM Revenue & Customs in order to be eligible for 80% mandatory relief. They can also receive up to a further 20% discretionary relief.
- 1.4 In the case of non-profit making organisations, all or part of the property must be occupied by an institution or organisation which is not established or conducted for profit and whose main objectives are charitable or otherwise philanthropic or religious, or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts or it is wholly or mainly used for the purposes of recreation.

2. Awarding Relief

- 2.1 The Council's policy for determining applications for discretionary rate relief can be divided into 2 parts as follows:

Part 1

- 2.2 A 'top-up' discretionary rate relief of up to 20% may be granted to charitable organisations which already receive 80% mandatory relief.
The Council currently chooses to award 'top-up' relief to scouts, guides and the sea cadets.

Part 2

- 2.3 It is intended that the scheme provides a mechanism for sports clubs and organisations to continue and expand their role in providing sports development opportunities, by maximising the availability of relief to those clubs and organisations who operate in accordance with the Council's aspirations for the development of sport in the City.
- 2.4 All sports clubs and organisations will start off with a flat rate of 40% rate relief, provided that they meet the following criteria:
- (a) The primary purpose of the club/organisation should be to provide sporting opportunities to its members or to a local community
 - (b) Membership should be open to all members of the community irrespective of gender, race, age, disability, religious belief and financial circumstances

- (c) Membership fees should be realistic and not used as a means of restricting membership to a particular community group
- (d) Profits and surpluses must be used to further the sporting objectives of the club/organisation and not distributed as a share or dividend amongst some or all members
- (e) A legal constitution must be in existence and applicants must demonstrate that they are operating in accordance with its requirements.

3. Adjusted Relief

3.1 Applicants who meet all of the above criteria and are awarded the basic 40% rate relief, will also be able to have their relief adjusted by some or all of the following:

- 10% The applicant can demonstrate a close working relationship with local schools & disabled groups and where practical, has supported the development of their sport(s) in schools and has encouraged and assisted school pupils and/or disabled persons to join appropriate clubs. The applicant undertakes to continue this development work
- 10% The applicant can demonstrate support for its coaches and administrators to obtain further relevant qualifications, e.g. coaching qualifications, National Coaching Foundation courses, Running Sport courses etc. The applicant undertakes to continue this work.
- 10% The applicant can demonstrate that they have provided opportunities for regular use of its facilities and equipment by outside groups/the Council's Sports Development Unit and undertakes to continue this policy
- 10% The applicant can demonstrate that they have in place or are working towards a development plan and (if applicable) a child protection policy
- 20% Should fewer than 50% of members be resident in the City, then a reduction in relief of 20% of the total rate liability will be made

Table of relief at current levels.

Relief	
Discretionary Rate Relief	Base level of 40%
Work with Schools or Disadvantaged Groups	+10%
Support for coaches/administrators	+10%
Shared use of facilities	+10%
Current Development Plan/child protection policy	+10%
Less than 50% of members resident in the borough	-20%

4. Awarding Relief

- 4.1 Any ratepayer applying for discretionary rate relief who does not meet the criteria for relief under the existing policy must meet all of the following criteria and any award will be based on these factors:
- (a) The ratepayer must not be entitled to mandatory rate relief (Charity or Rural Rate Relief)
 - (b) The ratepayer must not be an organisation that could receive relief as a non-profit making organisation or as Community Amateur Sports Club.
 - (c) The ratepayer must occupy the premises – no relief will be granted for unoccupied properties
 - (d) The premises and the organisation must be of significant benefit to the residents of the City
 - (e) The ratepayer must:
 - (i) Provide facilities to certain priority groups such as elderly, disabled, minority or disadvantaged groups, OR
 - (ii) Provide significant employment or employment opportunities to residents of the City
 - (f) Provide residents of the City with such services, opportunities or facilities that cannot be obtained locally or are not provided by another organisation
 - (g) The ratepayer must show that the organisation will comply with all legislative requirements and operate in an ethical, sustainable, and environmentally friendly manner at all times
- 4.2 Where a ratepayer can demonstrate that all the above criteria are met, any award must have due regard to:
- (a) the financial status of the applicant when determining the level of relief to be granted, and
 - (b) the impact and best interests of the Council Tax payers of the City
- 4.3 Relief will not be given to those organisations where a bar is the main activity. It would be expected that any bar profits would be used to offset any expenses thus negating the reliance on public funds.
- 4.4 Where a ratepayer is suffering hardship or severe difficulties in paying their rates liability then an application may be made for relief under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. There will be no requirement to grant relief in such cases under the Council's discretionary rate relief policy.
- #### 5. Level and Period of Relief granted
- 5.1 The level of relief to be granted, if any, will range from 0% to 100% of the ratepayer's liability. Awards of discretionary rate relief will be made for a fixed period and reviewed on an annual basis.

6. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 It is important that the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy clearly shows the criteria on which premises could be eligible so that all potential applicants are aware of why their application has been either accepted or refused.

PART B

EXTENSIONS TO CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL'S DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 amends Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The changes came into effect from 1 April 2012, and they extend the existing provision relating to the granting of discretionary rate relief.
- 1.2 The changes allow Local Authorities to grant discretionary rate relief in any circumstances where it feels fit. However, the whole cost of any purely discretionary relief awarded will have to be met by the City's Council Tax payers. Some discretionary reliefs are reimbursed in full by the Government via grants paid in accordance with section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. Details of such reliefs are set out below in paragraphs 2 to 5 below

2. **RETAIL, HOSPITALITY AND LEISURE RELIEF SCHEME (Applicable in financial year 1 APRIL 2025 to 31 MARCH 2026 ONLY)**

- 2.1 The available Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief is a reduction of 40% of the non-domestic rates bill after mandatory reliefs and other discretionary reliefs funded by Section 31 grants have been applied. It can be awarded retrospectively to qualifying businesses. The Council will strictly apply the criteria contained in its 2025/26 Discretionary Rate Relief policy to any such applications.

3. **SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS RELIEF (2026/27 to 2028/29)**

- 3.1 The Supporting Small Business Relief (SSBR) will help those ratepayers who, as a result of the change in their rateable value at the 2026 revaluation or measures announced in the 2025 Budget, are losing some or all of their Small Business Rate Relief, Rural Rate relief, 40% Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief and/or 2023 SSBR and, as a result, are facing large increases in their bills.
- 3.2 There is no discretion around whether to grant this relief if the terms of the scheme are met. Full technical detail regarding the operation of this scheme can be found at [Business Rates Relief: 2026 Supporting Small Business Relief, local authority guidance - GOV.UK](#)
- 3.3 The SSBR scheme will ensure that the increase per year in the bills of eligible ratepayers is limited to a cash value of the greater of £800 per year during the operation of the scheme or the relevant caps within the statutory transitional relief scheme or until the full increased liability is reached. Businesses previously eligible for the 2023 SSBR scheme will receive this continued protection for one year only (until 31 March 2027).

- 3.4 The statutory transitional relief scheme restricts increases to a fixed percentage of the previous year's bill. The percentage varies according to the rateable value of the property and changes during the three year duration of the scheme until the full increased liability has been reached.

Rateable Value	2026/27 cap increase	2027/28 cap increase	2028/29 cap increase
Up to £20,000	5%	10% plus inflation	25% plus inflation
£20,001 to £100,000	15%	25% plus inflation	40% plus inflation
Over £100,000	30%	25% plus inflation	25% plus inflation

As stated in paragraph 7.3, where the 2026/27 rate liability is higher than the 2025/26 liability, it will increase by the **greater** of the transitional relief cap increase or the £800 Supporting Small Business Relief.

- 3.5 Ratepayers remain in the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme until 31 March 2029 or until they reach the bill they would have paid without the scheme. A change of ratepayers will not affect eligibility for the SSBR scheme but eligibility will be lost if the property falls vacant or becomes occupied by a charity or Community Amateur Sports Club.
- 3.6 There is no 2nd property test for eligibility for Supporting Small Business relief scheme. However, those ratepayers who during 2025/26 lost entitlement to small business rate relief because they failed the 2nd property test but have, under the rules for small business rate relief, been given a 12 month period of grace (or 3 years if the ratepayer took on the second property after 27/11/2025) before their relief ended can continue on the scheme for the remainder of their period of grace.
- 3.7 As with all reliefs, the amount of relief awarded under the Supporting Small Business relief scheme should be recalculated in the event of a change to the rateable value of the hereditament. This change of circumstance could arise during the year in question or during a later year.
- 3.8 The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1059) require authorities to provide ratepayers with at least one year's notice in writing before any decision to revoke or vary a decision so as to increase the amount the ratepayer has to pay takes effect. Such a revocation or variation of a decision can only take effect at the end of a financial year. But within these regulations, local authorities may still make decisions which allow the amount of relief to be amended within the year to reflect changing circumstances.
- 3.9 Therefore, when making an award for SSBR, the conditions of the award include that it can be recalculated in the event of a change to the rating list (retrospective or otherwise). This is so that the relief can be recalculated if the rateable value changes. This applies to all Discretionary Relief awarded by Chelmsford City Council.

4 PUBS AND LIVE MUSIC VENUES RELIEF (effective 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027)

- 4.1 A relief of 15% will be applied to the remaining business rate liability (ie after all other applicable reliefs) of pubs and live music venues during the financial year 2026/27. The

Government has provided local authorities with detailed guidance regarding the relief [Business rates: Pubs and live music venues relief - local authority guidance - GOV.UK](#)

- 4.2 Relief will be awarded to pubs that meet all of the following characteristics:
- is open to the general public
 - allows free entry other than when occasional entertainment is provided
 - allows drinking without requiring food to be consumed: and,
 - permits drinks to be purchased at a bar
- 4.3 The meaning of a pub does not include:
- restaurants, cafes, nightclubs, snack bars
 - hotels, guesthouses, boarding houses
 - festival sites, theatres, concert halls, cinemas
 - museums, exhibition halls: and,
 - casinos
- 4.4 The proposed exclusions in 4.3 are not intended to be exhaustive, local authorities will apply characteristics that would lead a business to be classified as a pub using its natural and generally accepted meanings.
- 4.5 Live music venues:
- are wholly or mainly used for the performance of live music for the purpose of entertaining an audience
 - can be used for other activities but only if those other activities:
 - i) are ancillary or incidental to the performance of live music (eg the sale of food or drink to audience members)
 - ii) do not affect the primary use of the premises for the performance of live music (eg because the activities are infrequent)

FILM STUDIO RELIEF (effective 1 APRIL 2024 to 31 March 2034)

- 5.1 Although no properties in the Chelmsford City Council area fit the criteria defined by the Government, it is included in the policy for the sake of completeness. Full qualifying criteria are set out here [Business rates: Film studio relief - local authority guidance - GOV.UK](#) . In summary, qualifying film studios will benefit from a 40% reduction in their gross business rate bills until 2034.

SUBSIDY ALLOWANCES

- 6.1 The Supporting Small Business Relief scheme is likely to amount to subsidy. Any relief provided by local authorities under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations. For detailed information see [UK subsidy control regime - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) regarding the UK's subsidy control regime and the UK's international subsidy control requirements.
- 6.2 The Minimal Financial Assistance rules allow public authorities to award up to £315,000 during the 'applicable period'. The 'applicable period' is defined as the elapsed period of the current financial years and the two preceding financial years. Businesses operating in more than one area should be aware of their reporting and accounting responsibilities if receiving multiple awards of Supporting Small Business Relief.

- 6.3 Where it is clear to the Council that a ratepayer is likely to breach subsidy controls or Minimal Financial Assistance limits, the Council will automatically withhold the relief. In any case, the Council will ask ratepayers to complete a subsidy declaration before granting the relief.

7 ADMINISTRATION OF APPLICATIONS FOR RELIEF (Parts A& B)

- 7.1 Decisions relating to the granting of reliefs will be delegated to the staff reporting to the Director of Connected Chelmsford. Most reliefs will be granted automatically using records already held by the Council. Applications from business rate payers who think they should be eligible must be made in writing to Chelmsford City Council, Business Rates, Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford CM1 1JE.
- 7.2 If an application for relief is accepted, the award will be back-dated to the start of entitlement where that date is within the financial year in which the application is received. In cases where the relief is one which is fully funded by way of Government grants, the back-dating may be extended into previous financial years as long as eligibility criteria are satisfied.
- 7.3 There is no statutory right of appeal against a decision made by the Council in respect of discretionary reliefs. However, the Council will review the decision if the ratepayer is dissatisfied with the outcome. The review will be carried out by a senior officer within the Revenues Team. Any subsequent request for review will be considered by the Revenue and Benefit Services Manager in consultation with the Director for Connected Chelmsford.
- 7.4 If an unsuccessful applicant requests a review, they will still need to continue to pay their rates bill. Once the review has been carried out, the ratepayer will be informed, in writing, of the decision.
- 7.5 The right of appeal process does not affect a ratepayer's legal right to challenge the decision by way of a judicial review.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Work Programme

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Author</u>
14 September 2026	
Performance Review Items	
Cabinet Portfolio Updates	<p>Leader of the Council*</p> <p>Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford*</p> <p>Cabinet Deputy for Cleaner Communities*</p>
Standing Items	
Updates from representatives on Outside Bodies 2025/26	Freddey Banks-Ayres Democratic Services Officer
16 November 2026	
Performance Review Items	
Cabinet Portfolio Update	<p>Cabinet Member for Planning & Place Shaping*</p> <p>Cabinet Deputy for Economy and Sustainable Transport*</p>
Annual Report on Housing Delivery	Jeremy Potter Spatial Planning Services Manager
Standing Items	
Report on Decisions Taken Under Delegation to the Chief Executive	Freddey Banks-Ayres Democratic Services Officer
8 February 2027	
Performance Review Items	
Cabinet Portfolio Update	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing*
Annual Presentation by Safer Chelmsford Partnership and Essex Police	<p>Spencer Clarke Public Protection Manager</p> <p>Chief Inspector, Essex Police</p>

Standing Items	
Report on Decisions Taken Under Delegation to the Chief Executive	Freddey Banks-Ayres Democratic Services Officer
12 April 2027	
Performance Review Items	
Cabinet Portfolio Updates	Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford* Cabinet Member for Finance*
Standing Items	
Updates from representatives on Outside Bodies	Freddey Banks-Ayres Democratic Services Officer
Items to be added	
Housing Update	Joe Reidy Paul Brookes

*Due to changes in the Cabinet these items may be subject to change.