

COUNCIL MEETING – 25 February 2026

CABINET QUESTION TIME

1. Question from Councillor Davis to the Leader of the Council

In light of Central Government's most recent decision to no longer postpone local elections and to have already delayed proposed Mayoral elections until 2028, concerns remain about the deliverability and governance risks associated with Local Government Reorganisation.

Given the seemingly never-ending shifts in timetable and policy at national level:

1. Does the Leader of the Council have full confidence that the proposed new unitary authorities will be established within the Government's stated timeline, or does he agree with me that LGR will be the next policy to be drawn out over a longer period before being scrapped altogether?

2. What specific assurances has the Council received from Ministers regarding legislative time, financial support, and implementation capacity to ensure these deadlines are met?

3. In the event of likely delays — whether due to parliamentary pressures, boundary reviews, financial constraints, or transitional complexities — what contingency plans are in place to:

- * Maintain democratic accountability;

- * Avoid further postponement of elections; and

- * Protect frontline service delivery during any extended shadow period?

Given the scale of structural change being proposed, residents deserve clarity on whether this reorganisation is genuinely deliverable within the proposed timeframe, or whether further disruption and uncertainty should be anticipated.

2. Question from Councillor Bonnett to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property

It is of concern that the Labour Government's policies are forcing many businesses throughout the country to close down. I am delighted that the policies of the previous Conservative Administration which rejuvenated Chelmsford have meant that the City is thriving, but the night-time economy seems to have a large number of outlets closing, albeit that they are often replaced by new ones. Will the Council consider introducing a trial period of free evening parking in one or two city-centre car parks to assist the further growth of this important sector of the economy?

3. Question from Councillor Sullivan to the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford

The planning application for the installation of 8 single Solohaus Modular Temporary Homes with waste/refuse and amenity spaces has caused a lot of concern to, and approaches from, residents of my ward of Chelmer Village and Beaulieu Park. As is customary in recent times, this was notified to residents by yellow notices affixed to lampposts in the area. Many people did not see these, maybe because the area is adjacent to a major industrial park with low footfall from residents.

Neighbours have stated to me that when, and I quote "Something like this being considered for approval by the Council, then the people living in the neighbourhood, both residents and businesses, have a right to be made directly aware first by the Council. The notice there should be printed and put through letterboxes by Councillors or posted to us, as this has a big impact on us and the existing green environment."

I have yet to make a decision regarding the application, which closes for consultation this week, but feel that I have to question the notification process. Residents have asked, and I quote again, "I have tried already to add my Comments on the Council Planning Website but it times out or crashes or comes up with an error message, remote exception occurred. Are Planning trying to limit the number of objections they receive?"

My questions are, therefore, has the cabinet member reviewed the planning notification process recently, are they confident that residents of locally controversial proposals are made sufficiently aware, and have process improvements been considered? Have they satisfied themselves that there are no adverse consequences to local residents from the current practice?