

**CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**  
held on 3 December 2025 at 7pm

**PRESENT:**

The Mayor, J Sosin

Councillors C Adutwim, J Armstrong, H Ayres, G Bonnett, N Bugbee, N Chambers, D Clark, H Clark, P Clark, A Davidson, C Davidson, S Davis, J Deakin, S Dobson, N Dudley, D Eley, K Franks, L Foster, J Frascona, I Fuller, S Goldman, S Hall, R Hyland, J Jeape, B Knight, J Lardge, R Lee, S Manley, L Mascot, B Massey, R Moore, O'Brien, V Pappa, J Raven, S Robinson, S Scott, T Sherlock, M Sismey, A Sosin, M Steel, S Sullivan, M Taylor, A Thompson, A Thorpe-Apps, C Tron, N Walsh, R Whitehead and S Young.

### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Canning, Davey, Hawkins, Potter, Rajesh, Sampson and Wilson.

### 2. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reflected on the sad passing of former Mayor Bob Shepherd in September, it was noted that Bob had served as a Conservative Councillor in the Little Baddow, Danbury and Sandon ward between November 2004 and March 2022. The Council also heard they had chaired the Development Policy Committee for a number of years and had been the Mayor in 2011, it was noted that they would be missed and that thoughts were with their family and friends. Councillors Whitehead and Robinson paid tribute to them and reflected on their previous career in the Police along with their valued work as a dedicated ward Councillor for Little Baddow, Danbury and Sandon, a minutes silence was held in their memory.

The Mayor also noted the sad passing of two former Borough Councillors, Marjorie Gill and Ian Gale, also a past Mayoress Christine Van Tromp, it was noted that thoughts were with their families and friends. The Mayor informed the Council that by the end of November, the Mayoralty had attended 180 engagements and that this would be over 200 by the end of 2025. They also detailed upcoming events, including the Civic Carol Service on Friday 12 December and other fundraising events.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded to declare at the appropriate time, any interests in the business on the meeting's agenda. None were made.

### 4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

### 5. Public Questions

[Six public questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting, which can be viewed via this link.](#)

The first question asked about concerns regarding a recent event that had taken place on Tindal Square and whether the Council had authorised this and if it complied with booking policies. In response the Leader of the Council confirmed that despite receiving an initial request, the Council had not issued permission for the activity as it related to a protest and did not meet the criteria for booking Tindal Square, instead it had been referred to Essex Police to manage as a protest. The Leader of the Council also added that any concerns about what happened at the protest, would need to be directed to Essex Police.

The second question raised concerns about illegal development activity on Meadow Lane and asked for information about next steps following an outcome in the High Court, whether granting planning permission on another plot was sending a mixed message following the High Court Enforcement Action and what the Council's strategy would be going forward. In response the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford stated that the High Court Order had included mandatory steps of clearing the land and restoring it to its former condition. It was anticipated that a planning application would be made and if done within three months, then the land could continue to be occupied until 9 months after the date the planning application was refused or any appeal was dismissed. It was also stated that planning applications were dealt with on their own individual merits and on a case by case basis and that an application at Inisheer Farm had limited adverse impacts that had not significantly outweighed the cumulative benefits. The Cabinet Member also stated that an additional vacancy within the planning enforcement team had been advertised, but no suitable candidates had come forward. It was noted that the team would have more high capacity now the injunction had been granted and once another high priority case had been actioned. At that point the team would fully review plots within Meadow Lane, identify those which are in breach of planning control. Recommend and prioritise actions for sites in breach of planning control, take any action as necessary dependent on resourcing and priority, identify plots which could be investigated from a licensing perspective and liaise with Public Health and Protection Services to assist with licensing investigations.

The third question asked when the Council would work with the Home Office to reduce daily bus drop-offs of asylum seekers from the Wethersfield site, why additional funding had been required for policing by the MP if there was no risk as suggested, if the Council would consider a curfew and what measures would be taken to address

concerns. In response the Leader of the Council stated that Local Councils had no say or influence over the housing or transport of asylum seekers, so the question should have been addressed to the Home Office. They stated that if anyone had any evidence, not just speculation or hearsay of crime or anti-social behaviour, that it should be reported to Essex police. They highlighted the Council's strong record on Community Safety, partnership working with Essex Police and the Business Improvement District which made Chelmsford a safe place. They stated that the City had received Purple Flag status for 11 years in a row, recognising that it had an effective community safety partnership and was a safe and vibrant city. They also highlighted CCTV investments along with partnership work on Saturday nights, via the SOS bus, Taxi Marshalls and co-ordinated nights of action with Essex Police. The Council also heard that Chelmsford had been the first area in Essex to develop a Women's Safety Charter, which others across the County had used to follow suit. Work was also highlighted to make Chelmsford safer and more inclusive for women and girls that had been happening in schools, the Make Space for Girls programme and training on tackling misogyny, knife crime, gangs and alcohol advice for 600 students at Chelmsford College.

The fourth question raised concerns about Domestic Abuse being insufficiently prioritised within policing and multi-agency safeguarding in Essex, reported concerns being minimised, inconsistent investigations and stated that the Council had both the legal responsibility and practical ability to drive improvement through oversight, commissioning, policy setting and partnership working. In response the Cabinet Member for a Safer Chelmsford stated that Domestic Abuse was a key priority for the Safer Chelmsford Partnership and for the Council under its corporate safeguarding responsibilities. They highlighted staff training on tackling domestic abuse appropriate to job roles and that staff were aware of all forms of abuse via mandatory safeguarding training. It was noted that staff from Housing Services attended case conferences for those persons at risk of abuse on a regular basis to ensure that they were safeguarded in their homes. They also highlighted that the Council had championed tackling violence against women and girls by being the first Council in Essex to launch a Women's Safety Charter in 2022, followed up by the Active Bystander campaign in 2024. The Council also heard about training on misogyny in schools and that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were provide with police performance figures, including on domestic abuse annually. [The Cabinet Member also highlighted that a key priority in the current Police and Crime Plan was to "Tackle violence against women and girls and domestic abuse" and detailed the pledges within the plan.](#)

The fifth question stated that the Council provided free use of classes and facilities at tax payer funded leisure centres for asylum seekers and asked about other services which were being provided, when services to residents were being cut due to finances. In response the Leader of the Council stated that asylum seekers were the responsibility of the Home Office, not Local Councils. They stated that along with many other Local Authorities, the City Council had run a scheme for Afghan refugees, providing some activity at off peak times for a maximum three month period. However they were not asylum seekers as the Government had given them permission to come to Britain because in most cases, they had worked for the British Government or Army and that this had later been extended to include Ukrainian refugees. It was noted that the scheme had subsequently been taken up in 2024 by a number of asylum seekers making use of the gym facilities at Riverside, however as the intention of the scheme

had been to support families, the use of the gym had been removed from the list of off peak activities available. The Leader of the Council also highlighted that attendance and membership at the Council's leisure centres had continued to rise, and that they no longer cost the taxpayers anything as the costs were covered by entrance and membership fees.

The sixth question raised concerns that the Council's stance towards Chelmsford's licensed taxi trade was putting public safety at risk, particularly for young women. They asked about significant numbers of Uber vehicles, out-of-area vehicles, permit costs at Beaulieu Park Station leading to an empty rank and vehicle replacement requirements, in summary that the fleet was being weakened and undermining public safety as a result. In response the Cabinet Member for a Safer Chelmsford stated that Uber had been legally permitted to operate in Chelmsford for some time under national legislation, but had now obtained an operator licence like any other operator and all Uber drivers working locally were subject to the same licence controls, standards and enforcement as any other Chelmsford private hire driver. It was also noted that to date no complaints from residents had been received about Uber and that any safety or safeguarding concerns would be addressed through liaison with Essex Police and the relevant Licensing Authority. The Cabinet Member also stated that cross-border hiring was legal and acceptable, but the Council could not directly enforce licence conditions on those vehicles, however concerns about specific drivers or vehicles whether licensed by Chelmsford or not should be reported to the Council and where appropriate to the Police for investigation. The Council heard that 19 permits had been issued for Beaulieu Park Station at £200 for an initial 6 months, to help support the Council's costs in managing the station complex. It was noted that passenger levels had been difficult to predict and initial taxi demand appeared to be low, confirmed by feedback from drivers. It was noted that it was very early days though and the use of the station and rank was under continuous review and monitoring by Council staff, also that the introduction of the scheme had gone through the correct democratic process, which had been an opportunity for members of the public to raise issues. It was also noted that decisions on matters such as Euro 5 vehicle deadlines and other elements of Taxi Licensing Policy were for members of the Regulatory Committee to consider. The Cabinet Member stated that the Council did not accept that it's policies were undermining public safety or disproportionately affecting passengers. It was noted that all local Licensing requirements were designed to maintain high safety and suitability standards for drivers and vehicles, particularly at night and to protect passengers, including women and other vulnerable groups.

## 6. Cabinet Question Time

The following questions from Councillors were put to members of the Cabinet:

### Question from Councillor J Jeapes to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property

You will recall the story in the Daily Telegraph a few weeks ago about a 'Bridge to Nowhere'.

To quote:

*A £52m road through the Amazon jungle is being built using British aid that is intended to help the climate. The road in Guyana goes nowhere other than a tiny village and has long been criticised by environmentalists, though it is celebrated by the oil industry. It is just one among hundreds of schemes funded by taxpayers.*

The City Council has just opened a bridge to the Waterside peninsular which, as shown in the Council's capital budget produced at October's Cabinet, page 38, has cost a total of £45M. This bridge was originally budgeted to cost £15M, again as shown in the Council's capital budget, so it has cost three times the original estimate.

Is it not a similar 'Bridge to Nowhere', as Waterside does not figure in the current consultation on the Local Plan and the City Council has not published details of how this important brown field site is to be developed?

As Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee I plan to put the development of Waterside on to the agenda at its next meeting, but in advance of this:

**Can the Cabinet member explain why the final cost is three times the original budget?**

**Can the Cabinet Member explain why the bridge was built using public money when the cost should have been borne by a developer of this site?**

**Can the Cabinet Member advise us when a Development Agreement will be signed to enable work to start at Waterside?**

In response to the question, the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property stated that the site had been allocated for housing led development in the May 2020 adopted Chelmsford Local Plan, specifically the requirement for a new road access over the River Chelmer had been set out in that plan, which had been a long standing strategic infrastructure and policy objective, supported by the current and previous administration. It was noted that it provided the necessary infrastructure first in advance of housing, something Council's were often criticised for otherwise. The Cabinet Member took the Council through the various costs and grants that were part of the scheme, that led to the agreed budget at Full Council in July 2023 of £43.68m for all the infrastructure for Chelmer Waterside. It was noted that Bow Bridge itself had not cost £45m or three times the budget as claimed, the latest position which would be finalised after the 12 months maintenance period in July 2026 was expected to be around £20.9m, £1.7m under the budget approved by Full Council in July 2023. The Cabinet Member also highlighted that the construction of the Bridge had been funded using a combination of the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund grant, S106 contributions for this purpose and the Community Infrastructure Levy. It was noted that both S106 and Cil were provided by developers, whilst Housing Infrastructure Fund was provided by Central Government. The Cabinet Member highlighted that given the cost of delivering the required infrastructure and the Council's regeneration and affordable housing objectives for the site, expecting the infrastructure costs to be delivered solely by a developer was unrealistic, impractical and undeliverable and would have likely led to the site becoming an undevelopable brownfield site for another 30 years. It was noted that instead, the site was now in the best position possible and attractive to a developer wanting to work with the Council. The Cabinet Member also

clarified that the procurement exercise to secure a development partner through a development agreement structure was underway and that proposals would be considered by Cabinet in the spring, accompanied by a recommendation on the preferred bidder. In response to follow up points from Cllr Jeapes, the Cabinet Member stated that the infrastructure had to be put in first, to allow the building of homes and that the site would have remained empty otherwise.

### Question from Councillor M Steel to the Cabinet Member for Greener Chelmsford

The City Council is consulting on the addition of fifteen new sites to address the shortfall in the five-year land supply in the currently adopted Local Plan, apparently caused by delayed actual and forecast delivery of new homes.

The causes, in addition to the poor economic policies of the Labour Government, are said to be major sites which cannot now meet conditions laid down in the Local Plan, due particularly to the cancellation of the A12 widening scheme and the failure of the company proposing to develop the Meadows site in Chelmsford.

It is clear from the national picture that many councils are suffering similar issues and housebuilding is falling behind the Government's unrealistic target of an extra 1.5M new homes in this parliamentary term.

There is a public perception that this council has too readily accepted these higher targets without publishing why there will be shortfall in Chelmsford's five-year housing supply and vitally needed infrastructure.

**Will the Cabinet Member advise residents why the adding of the additional sites represents a major change in strategy from large strategic sites to smaller sites that apparently require little extra infrastructure.**

These fifteen new sites have been selected mainly on the basis that they can be delivered in the next five years without the need for additional infrastructure. The addition of these new sites is intended to fill a short-term gap.

However, assuming that homes on the existing sites will still eventually be delivered, the new sites would form a permanent addition to the total housing supply.

**Would the Cabinet Member confirm that the additional sites now being consulted on could be removed from the plan or reduced if, for example, the Beaulieu development gains pace because the Junction 19 improvements are met by the developers?**

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In response to the question, the Cabinet Member for Greener Chelmsford stated that the Government had changed the formula for calculating local housing via proposals published in summer 2024. It was noted that the Council had made robust representations to the changes, highlighting that without significant increases in



funding for affordable housing and infrastructure delivery, the big jump in numbers would not be deliverable and would fail to address the housing crisis. The Council heard that the Government reaffirmed the changes though and as such there was a requirement for the Council to address the higher housing numbers, in a managed and plan led way. It was noted that the larger sites within the Local Plan could take 20 years or longer to be built, so in light of the higher targets and sluggish delivery, there was a need to allocated homes that could be built within five years on smaller sites. It was noted that these sites were consistent with the Local Plan's Spatial Strategy and that they would be vital to Chelmsford's sustainable growth. It was also noted that the sites would assist with the overall housing need across the whole plan period and that all Local Plans were reviewed every five years and that future housing allocations would always be considered in that context, however given the significant reduction in the overall housing supply buffer, it was highly unlikely that any deliverable allocated sites or their housing numbers would be removed from the Local Plan.

In response to follow up points from Cllr Steel, the Cabinet Member stated that larger strategic sites were looked at with all partners present, including Homes England and that the consultation on the additional sites would run until the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and asked that Councillors promote the consultation. They also stated that pressuring developers into building out sites quickly was a delicate and complex negotiation, with a lot of work behind the scenes, but that they had full faith in the Council's expert officers who continued to go above and beyond to ensure sustainable housing delivery across Chelmsford.

## 7. Reports from the Cabinet on 11 November 2025

### 7.1 Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2025/26

The Council received a report outlining the treasury activities undertaken in the first part of the 2025/26 financial year and to report on compliance with the approved treasury management strategy. In response to concerns including external borrowing, the use of assets and specific funds, the Cabinet Member stated that the portfolio had made a profit of over £1m in the last four years, income had been better than cash returns and that it continued to be the right strategy that allowed choices to be made to address issues facing residents. It was also noted that external borrowing had been forecast in 2019, but it had taken much longer than anticipated to actually reach that point and that the key element to consider was that the borrowing was expected to be affordable, in terms of interest payments.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted with no changes required to the ongoing treasury management strategy.

(8.07pm to 8.19pm)

### 7.2 Local Council Tax Support Scheme

The Council was required to approve a Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2026/27. The Cabinet on 11 November 2025 had recommended that the 2025-26 scheme be retained in its current form.

RESOLVED that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025-26 be retained and adopted as the Scheme for 2026-27.

(8.20pm to 8.22pm)

### 7.3 Statement of Licensing Policy

The Licensing Committee and Cabinet had reviewed the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003 and had recommended that it be approved without change.

RESOLVED that the Statement of Licensing Policy as submitted to the meeting be approved without amendment.

(8.23pm to 8.24pm)

## 8. Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the activity of the scrutiny function of the Council for 2024/25 was submitted for information.

The report outlined the Committee's main areas of work over the past year, which had included updates from Cabinet Members, and performance reviews of individual services. The Committee had also received the annual presentation on the work of Essex Police and the Safer Chelmsford Partnership. Officers were thanked for their support throughout the year. In response to a question, regarding the Corporate Peer Challenge team, it was noted that training had taken place for the Overview and Scrutiny Chair and Committee members and that the review had been delayed slightly due to LGR and that it would be presented to the Corporate Peer Challenge team in the new year.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2024-25 be approved for publication.

(8.25pm to 8.28pm)

## 9. Community Governance Review – Amended Terms of Reference

The Council were asked to note the amended Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review, to reflect the minor adjustments made to the timing of the initial consultation.

RESOLVED that the revised Terms of Reference, with the revision to the timing of the initial consultation, to accommodate the additional consultation preparation be approved.



(8.28pm to 8.29pm)

The meeting closed at 8.29pm

Mayor