

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