Governance Committee Agenda

18 November 2026

Membership

Councillor S. Rajesh (Chair)

and Councillors

H. Ayres, G. Bonnett, I. Fuller, K. Franks, S. Shah and S. Young

Parish Council Representatives

Councillor K. Bentley (South Woodham Ferrers Town Council)
Councillor K. Golla (Chelmsford Garden Community Council)
Councillor P. Jackson (Great Waltham Parish Council)

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

Governance Committee

18 November 2026

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes

To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2026.

3. 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.

4. 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 15 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, provided they have indicated that they wish to do so and have submitted an email address to which an invitation to join the meeting and participate in it can be sent.

5. Chair's Announcements

6. Monitoring Officer Report

7. Information Governance/Annual SIRO Update

8. Senior Responsible Officer's Report in relation to the Council's RIPA arrangements.

9. Report in Relation to Officer Register of Interests

10. Targeted Interim Polling District Review

11. Work Programme

12. 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 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

24 June 2026 at 7.15pm

Present:

Councillor S. Rajesh (Chair)

Councillors H. Ayres, G. Bonnett, K. Franks I. Fuller, S. Shah and S. Young

Also in attendance –

Parish Councillor P. Jackson

Independent Persons –
Ms P. Mills
Mr P. Jeremiah

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor K Bentley.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2026 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

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.

4. Public Question Time

No questions or statements were received from members of the public.

5. Chair's Announcements

No Announcements were received.

6. Monitoring Officer Report

The Monitoring Officer presented an update on the current position regarding standards complaints, alongside several wider governance updates. Members were advised that three new complaints had been received since the last report in March 2026. The Committee were informed of a complaint that had been received since

publishing the agenda, which was to be acknowledged shortly. Members were informed that there were two outstanding actions from the Cllr P Clark complaint, but that they were due to undertake training on 30th June and the censure report was due to be heard at July Full Council.

The Committee heard that all City and Parish register of interest forms were up to date and that existing practice to not publish Councillor's home addresses, was set to be formalised in updated legislation.

RESOLVED that the update be noted and that the standards enquiries and investigations statistics for the period of March 2026 – June 2026 be published online.

(7.16pm to 7.20pm)

7. Annual Review of Constitution

The Committee received a report detailing some proposed minor updates to the Constitution, following the annual review. The Committee were informed that the Constitution Working Group had been consulted via email, along with the Mayoral Working Group for the proposed Mayoralty rule changes and both groups had supported them. The Committee heard that changes had been proposed to the employee Code of Conduct, due to changes in the way officer interests were now declared and that changes had been proposed to the Mayoralty rules to reflect changes in day to day practice. The Committee were informed that if they supported the changes, they would go to Cabinet and Full Council in July for approval.

RESOLVED that the proposed Constitution changes as set out in Appendix 1 and 2, be recommended to Cabinet and Full Council for approval.

(7.21pm to 7.23pm)

8. Local Government Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code & Annual Letter

The Committee received a report updating them on the Council's position relating to the adoption of the LGSCO complaint handling code and the latest statistical data from the LGSCO. The report set out the Council's updated position via a self assessment assurance document and it was noted that the new annual report should be considered by the Cabinet in September 2026. The report also detailed the statistical performance in relation to complaints involving the Ombudsman.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(7.24pm to 7.27pm)

9. Annual Report of the Governance Committee 2025/26

The Committee received the annual report of the Governance Committee, outlining the work of the Committee for the last municipal year.

RESOLVED that the annual report be recommended to Full Council in July 2026 for approval.

(7.28pm to 7.30pm)

10. Work Programme

The Committee received an update on the work programme for 2026/27.

RESOLVED that the work programme of the Committee be noted.

(7.31pm to 7.33pm)

11. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.33pm

Chair

Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

18 November 2026

Monitoring Officer report

Report by:
Monitoring Officer

Officer Contact:
Lorraine Browne, Monitoring Officer, lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel - 01245 – 606560

Purpose
To update members concerning code of conduct complaints received and in relation to other relevant areas, including the LGSCO (Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman) complaints handling code compliance.

Recommendations
1. To note the current statistical information and agree that Appendix 1 should be published on the Council's website to confirm this.
2. To note the other updates set out in this report.

Summary of Key Points
This is a routine report to provide a redacted update on any standards complaints received since the previous report. The report is sometimes accompanied by other brief updates for members where a separate report to committee is unnecessary.

1. Introduction

1.1. To update members on the current position in relation to standards complaints and in relation to other relevant areas, update in relation to compliance with LGSCO complaint handling code compliance

2. Standards complaints against councillors

2.1. The Appendix to this report sets out the latest statistical data related to standards complaints.

2.2. Members will see that there have been 9 new complaints since the last report in June 2026. The details of the current position in relation to the complaints are set out in the attached appendix. This includes a further update concerning complaint 8/25 where training with the Monitoring Officer was undertaken with the Monitoring Officer in June 2026 and censure reported to July Council.

3. Update in relation to the LGSCO complaint handling code

3.1. The Council adopted the complaints handling code earlier this year and had complied with all relevant actions save for the development of an annual complaints report. During the summer the decision was made as a result of stretched resources due to LGR not to develop the annual report (and in effect await the new Unitary Council to make appropriate arrangements). With the news of a pause to LGR (followed more recently by a further update that LGR would proceed and a minded to decision is awaited) it has been decided to pause this work and await the further update on LGR after which the position will be reviewed.

4. Conclusion

4.1. It is recommended that members approve the usual update in relation to complaints for the publication on the website and note the update in relation to the LGSCO complaint handling code.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – code of conduct complaints reported

Background papers:

LGSCO complaint handling code

Corporate Implications

Corporate Implication	Response
Legal/Constitutional	It is good practice for statistical information (and other updates) to be provided to Governance Committee. Where any complaints are referred to in the appendix, a summary of the complaint without any personal data is provided. The other updates are provided so that committee members are aware of recent developments.
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	No EIA necessary for this report.
Health and Safety	None
Digital	None
Other	None

Consultees:

None

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Member Code of Conduct and Complaints Procedures

Statistical data in relation to Code of Conduct Complaints against councillors under the Localism Act 2011

Appendix 1 June 2026 – November 2026

Status of Complaint Categories	Total No.	Case No.	City, Parish tier Councillor	Date Issue First Raised	Alleged Breach or Issue Raised	Current Position
1. No formal complaint, invalid or withdrawn						
2. No further action required after consultation with one of the Independent Persons	5	4/26	Parish	June 26	Alleged disrespect, bullying and disrepute	Informal resolution – misunderstanding likely between parties - reminder to councillor. NFA of relevant LGA guidance.
		5/26	Parish	July 26	Alleged disrepute and breach of confidentiality	Breach of code unlikely NFA
		6/26	City	July 26	Alleged disrespect, disrepute, improper use of position	Breach of code unlikely NFA
		7/26	Parish	July 26	Alleged ROI had not been updated	Invalid complaint. Advice sought on register prior to complaint and no action necessary.

Status of Complaint Categories	Total No.	Case No.	City, Parish tier Councillor	Date Issue First Raised	Alleged Breach or Issue Raised	Current Position
		8/26	Parish	Sept 26	Various	Initially held in abeyance pending further information from complainant – further information not provided and the case now closed
3. Other action after consultation with one of the independent Persons						
4. Complaint on hold						
5. Decision as to appropriate action still awaited	3	10/26 11/26 12/26	Parish Parish Parish	Oct 26 Oct 26 Oct 26	Various Various Various	Initial assessment pending Initial assessment pending Initial assessment pending

Status of Complaint Categories	Total No.	Case No.	City, Parish tier Councillor	Date Issue First Raised	Alleged Breach or Issue Raised	Current Position
6. Complaints being investigated	1	9/26	Parish tier	October 26	Various	Decision to refer for investigation. Investigator to be appointed.
Total						

Formal Complaint Outcomes

	Case No. and Councillor	Committee Date and Decision	Date Issue First Raised	Current Position
Outcome of Investigations	8/25 – Cllr Paul Clark	11/3/26 Governance Committee	June 2025	Decision made by Committee that there was a breach of the code of conduct. Councillor notified of outcome which has also been published on website Training by Councillor completed in June 2026. Censure report to Full Council completed in July 2026. Complete and matter now closed
Other Action				

Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

18 November 2026

Information Governance Update

Report by:
Information Governance Manager & Data Protection Officer

Officer Contact:
John Breen, Information Governance Manager & DPO, email: john.breen@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel: 01245 606215

Purpose
To provide an annual update on the Council's approach to the assurance and management of information.

Recommendations
To note the contents of this report.

Summary of Key Points
1. Statutory request performance remained strong, with 93% compliance and no ICO referrals.
2. The Council continued to strengthen cyber security, information governance and staff awareness arrangements.
3. Significant progress has been made in records management, including the implementation of retention periods for Outlook and OneDrive and improvements to the Council's Record of Processing Activities.
4. Further work is planned to align with the Cyber Assessment Framework and continue improving information governance maturity.

1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update on the Council's approach to the assurance and management of information.

2. Achievements and Further Developments

2.1. Statutory Requests - Information requests comprise Freedom of Information requests, Environmental Information Regulations requests and Data Protection Act Subject Access Requests. In 2024/25, the Information Governance Team, working with Council services, processed 979 requests, of which 93% were answered within the statutory timescale. In 2025/26, 997 requests were received and 93% were also answered within the statutory timescale. No cases relating to these requests were referred to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) during 2025/26. While request volumes continue to increase by only around 2-3% each year, requests are becoming increasingly complex and resource-intensive to administer.

2.2. Data Breaches - the number of personal data breaches recorded was 38 in 2023/24, 23 in 2024/25 and 30 in 2025/26. The 30 breaches recorded during 2025/26 are categorised as follows (with last year's figures in brackets):

- 17 email breaches (12) – including emails sent to the wrong recipient or the use of the 'To' field instead of 'Bcc', resulting in recipients being able to view each other's email addresses.
- 10 enveloping breaches (9) – where correspondence intended for different individuals is enclosed in the same envelope or sent to an incorrect address.
- 0 security breaches (0) – relating to cyber incidents, phishing attacks or other information security compromises.
- 3 other breaches (2) – errors involving the publication of documents online.

All data breaches are subject to investigation in accordance with the Council's Data Breach Procedure, with lessons learned used to reduce the risk of recurrence and strengthen information handling practices. No breaches were reported to the ICO during 2025/26, consistent with the position in 2024/25.

2.3. Cyber Security - Cyber security has remained a significant focus for the Council in recent years, with further improvements made during 2025/26. The CISO role continues to be undertaken by the Digital Services Manager. The Council has enhanced its cyber security monitoring and incident response capabilities through regional collaboration and specialist support. Working alongside other authorities has strengthened the Council's cyber security posture and enabled effective responses to emerging cyber threats. This collaborative approach has also helped maintain operational resilience and support preparations for Local Government Reorganisation. The Council has

continued to invest in its technical infrastructure, including new hardware, system upgrades and security patching. Progress has also been made in migrating services to hosted solutions, either through third-party providers or the Council's own Dynamics 365 platform. Like all councils, the Council has been advised to work towards the new Cyber Assessment Framework. Adoption of the Framework will help demonstrate the progress made in strengthening the Council's cyber resilience. However, implementation will require engagement from a range of services across the authority

2.4. Training and Awareness - The ‘human factor’ remains one of the most significant risks to information security. Ensuring that staff and Councillors are appropriately trained is therefore a key component of the Council’s data protection and cyber security framework. The Council has continued to deliver mandatory annual information governance and cyber security training and provides targeted awareness communications and guidance throughout the year to support good information handling practices. In November 2025, the Council launched its latest organisation-wide training programme, achieving a completion rate of 92%, an increase from 90% in the previous year. The Council will continue to promote awareness of data protection and cyber security risks and responsibilities across the organisation. Following the successful completion of the November 2025 training programme, the Council's training provider ceased delivering services to the Council in March 2026. The Council is therefore considering options for a replacement solution. Whilst previous considerations were influenced by the anticipated changes arising from Local Government Reorganisation, the Council recognises the importance of maintaining effective cyber security awareness arrangements over the medium to longer term and will review the most appropriate approach during 2026/27.

2.5. Consents - the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) introduced more stringent requirements around consent, requiring organisations to ensure that consent is obtained and recorded appropriately. During the year, the Council strengthened its approach through the use of granular preference lists and a double opt-in process, helping to ensure that marketing communications are targeted, compliant and based on clear subscriber choices. The Council has also reintroduced website sign-up pop-ups to support list growth while maintaining compliance. The Council's e-shot marketing platform now contains over 102,000 unique contacts, while the Theatre's separate marketing database contains almost 58,000 emailable subscribers. Engagement remains strong, with average email open rates exceeding industry benchmarks and unsubscribe rates remaining low.

2.6. Privacy Notices - organisations are required to have privacy notices to inform users how they are going to use their data before receiving it. The Council now has over 30 privacy notices in place across a range of different service areas, which are regularly reviewed and updated.

2.7. Risk Management - information governance risks have been developed and fit the Council's risk management criteria. They are an important step in the Council's maturing information governance framework and enable the Council to put more effort and resources into areas which carry a higher risk.

2.8. Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) - DPIAs are a valuable tool for helping organisations identify and minimise privacy risks when introducing new processes, technologies or ways of working. In certain circumstances, they are a statutory requirement under UK GDPR and are used by the Council where there is likely to be a high risk to individuals' rights and freedoms. During the last year, DPIAs have been completed across a range of service areas and projects, including the use of drones, the implementation of RotaCloud and the introduction of AI agents within leisure services. These assessments help ensure that privacy and data protection considerations are embedded into projects from the outset.

2.9. Policies - the Council has a number of policies relating to information governance, cyber security and the protection of personal information. During the last year, the Council reviewed its Marketing Policy to improve the way marketing consents are obtained and recorded, and introduced a new WhatsApp Policy to provide clearer controls and guidance on the appropriate use of messaging applications for Council business.

2.10. Council Records and Records Retention - Effective records management is essential to the efficient operation of the Council. As services continue to modernise the technology they use, opportunities arise to improve the management and retention of records. During the last year, significant progress has been made in reviewing and updating the Council's Records of Processing Activity (ROPA). As required by UK GDPR, the ROPA provides a clearer understanding of the personal information held by the Council, how that information is used and the retention periods that apply. This work will support improvements in records management, reduce the volume of information retained beyond business need and assist preparations for Local Government Reorganisation, where information assets from multiple authorities may ultimately need to be consolidated.

2.11. Over the last two years, a seven-year retention period for emails held in Microsoft Outlook and documents held in OneDrive has been successfully implemented across the organisation. In March 2027, the Council intends to reduce the retention period for Outlook emails and OneDrive documents to five years as part of its ongoing programme of records management and information lifecycle improvements.

3. Conclusion

3.1. The Council has continued to make positive progress during the last year and has achieved strong outcomes across a range of information governance and cyber

security disciplines. Nevertheless, the threat landscape and regulatory environment continue to evolve, requiring ongoing investment in technology, training and governance arrangements to maintain and strengthen existing standards.

List of appendices:

None

Background papers:

None

Corporate Implications

Corporate Implication	Response
Legal/Constitutional	These are set out in the report
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

Equality Impact Assessment Conclusion

No Equality Impact Assessment required as a standard report for noting.

Consultees:

None

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

These are set out in this report

Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

18 November 2026

Senior Responsible Officer's Report in relation to the Council's RIPA arrangements.

Report by:
Senior Responsible Officer

Officer Contact:
Lorraine Browne, Monitoring Officer, lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel - 01245 - 606560

Purpose
To update members concerning the arrangements for covert surveillance.

Recommendations
That the Committee notes the report.

Summary of Key Points
This is a routine annual report to provide assurance to members as to the appropriateness and readiness of the Council's RIPA arrangements.

1. Introduction

1.1. RIPA relates to covert investigatory powers given to local authorities for specific and limited purposes. For local authorities such as Chelmsford City Council only three types of activity may be authorised and this includes directed surveillance, the use of covert human intelligence source and the acquisition of communications data. These powers are overseen by the Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office (IPCO) who undertakes periodic RIPA inspections. Details of how these types of activity could be authorised by the Council are set out in detail in two policies – the RIPA policy and the RIPA social media policy.

1.2. In terms of number of authorisations granted, as has been the case for some years, the Council has not needed to obtain any RIPA approvals during the past year. In any event the Council needs to make sure that it remains ready to do so if necessary and that staff are properly trained to ensure investigations continue to be undertaken in a lawful and appropriate way. Ongoing annual reviews of RIPA

arrangements are undertaken to support this and provide assurance.

1.3. Inspections by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) usually take place every 3 years. An inspection was undertaken earlier this year by way of a written response being provided to the inspectors for consideration. The inspectors were satisfied with the Council's arrangements and the response provided.

2. Annual review 2026

2.1. Both the Council's RIPA and RIPA Social Media Policies were reviewed in some detail during an inspection in 2020. Further technical updating was subsequently necessary because of legislative changes under the CHIS (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021 and a new CHIS Code of Practice. Personnel updates have also been made because of staff changes. The policy and personnel updates are made as necessary by the SRO under officer delegation.

2.2. Training of key personnel was completed in house in early 2026. RIPA policies together with training needs continue to be reviewed at least annually together with any ongoing actions through the RIPA officer working group. An unmanned aerial vehicle policy (commonly referred to as a "drone") has now been approved and as at the time of writing the report will shortly go live. An audit was undertaken to look at RIPA compliance and this made recommendations. All the actions have now been completed. Part of the annual review process also involves providing an assurance report to the Governance Committee, usually in the autumn.

2.3. The officer working group meets at least annually to review the current arrangements and met in the Autumn prior to this report being provided.

3. Conclusion

3.1. There are no concerns to report in relation to the Council's current arrangements which remain fit for purpose.

List of appendices:

None

Background papers:

RIPA and RIPA Social Media Policies

Corporate Implications

Corporate Implication	Response
Legal/Constitutional	These are set out in the RIPA policies referred to in the report. This report is provided to committee for assurance purposes as to the steps taken to ensure compliance and reduce risk of undertaking covert surveillance without appropriate consideration and authorisation.
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	See legal and constitutional para above
Equality and Diversity	No EIA necessary.
Health and Safety	None
Digital	None
Other	None

Consultees:

RIPA working group

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

RIPA and RIPA Social Media Policies

Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

18 November 2026

Report in Relation to Officer Register of Interests

Report by:
Monitoring Officer

Officer Contact:
Lorraine Browne, Monitoring Officer, lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel - 01245 - 606560

Purpose
To update members concerning the maintenance of the various disclosures and register of interests for officers.

Recommendations
That the Committee notes the report.

Summary of Key Points
This is a routine report to update Members on the maintenance of officer disclosures and the Register of Interests, which forms part of the Council's arrangements for complying with the Code of Conduct. It confirms that all officers required to complete an annual declaration of interests by virtue of their role have done so, with a 100% completion rate achieved.

1. Introduction

1.1. To help improve oversight and increase compliance in relation to the completion of register of interests, annual assurance reports were introduced in 2022. This report focusses on the latest position in relation to ongoing improvements for officer disclosures and declarations which have been dealt with online since 2025.

2. Officer Registers of Interests

2.1. All Council officers are bound by the Officer Code of Conduct. There are two categories of officers. Category 1 officers (which are broadly senior officers or those with procurement responsibilities) who are required to complete various disclosures annually, including any nil returns. Category 2 officers are all other officers, and they are only required to complete a disclosure where there is a need to do so.

2.2. Each year the Human Resources Department promote to both Category 1 and Category 2 employees the need to ensure the various officer disclosures required are made. There is also information available on the intranet, ongoing promotion of the need to keep any changes up to date as well as information provided to any new starters about the requirements.

2.3. Category 1 Officers are required to provide returns in relation to a register of interests, any gifts/hospitality, close personal relationships, outside commitments and any private work undertaken by a council contractor. Similarly, any Category 2 officers must make a disclosure where the need arises.

2.4. For the 2026 annual process, 100% of Category 1 officers have completed the process. Disclosures have also been received from Category 2 officers. Advice is also available to any officers where queries arise as to required disclosures.

2.5. Officer disclosures are not required to be published on the Council's website but some disclosures are reported to Governance Committee (eg gifts and hospitality) and where necessary information is shared with relevant services (e.g. in relation to contracts).

3. Conclusion

3.1. The Council has introduced improved arrangements to ensure required officer disclosures are made and kept up to date.

List of appendices:

None

Background papers:

Officer Code of Conduct

Corporate Implications

Corporate Implication	Response
Legal/Constitutional	It is good practice for updates as to the arrangements that are in place as part of the assurance process which members oversee.
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	The report provides assurance as to how risks are managed within the process for collecting information from officers.
Equality and Diversity	None
Health and Safety	None
Digital	None
Other	None

Consultees:

Manager of HR/OD

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Officer Code of Conduct

Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

18 November 2026

Targeted Interim Polling District Review

Report by:
Nick Eveleigh, Chief Executive

Officer Contact:
Murphie Manning, Democracy and Elections Manager,
murphie.manning@chelmsford.gov.uk, tel - 01245 606510

Purpose
To seek the Committee's approval of a targeted amendment to polling district boundaries, transferring Bishop Hall Lane from the Marconi ward (Rectory Lane polling district) to the Lawns ward (Springfield Chelmer polling district) so that polling district arrangements align with the existing Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries ahead of the upcoming local elections. This is a limited alignment exercise and does not constitute a comprehensive review of polling districts or a change to City Council ward boundaries.

Recommendations
1. That the Committee approve the transfer of Bishop Hall Lane from Rectory Lane polling district back to Springfield Chelmer polling district, to align polling district arrangements with the existing Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries ahead of the upcoming local elections.
2. That the Committee note that this is a targeted interim amendment to polling district arrangements only and does not alter City Council ward boundaries or constitute a comprehensive review of polling districts or polling places.

Summary of Key Points
- Approval is sought to transfer Bishop Hall Lane from Rectory Lane polling district back to Springfield Chelmer polling district to ensure polling arrangements align with existing City Council ward boundaries ahead of the May 2027 elections.
- The change restores the arrangements that existed before the 2026 Essex County Council elections and does not alter any ward or county division boundaries. A wider review is not considered appropriate at this stage due to ongoing uncertainty around Local Government Reorganisation.

- If approved, affected electors will vote at Springfield Hall Park Clubhouse and the change will be reflected in the electoral register published on 1 December 2026. No objections had been received at the time of publication.

1. Introduction

1.1. This report seeks approval for a targeted polling district amendment affecting Bishop Hall Lane. The street must be transferred from Rectory Lane polling district back to Springfield Chelmer polling district to align polling arrangements with the existing Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries ahead of the local elections scheduled for May 2027. Bishop Hall Lane is included in The Lawns ward for Chelmsford City Council elections and this has remained unchanged since the 2023 local elections. The current polling district arrangement arose as part of changes made to accommodate revised Essex County Council boundaries.

1.2. The amendment restores the polling district arrangements that applied to Bishop Hall Lane before the 2026 Essex County Council elections. It is a necessary alignment exercise, not a comprehensive review, and does not change City Council ward or county division boundaries.

2. Background

2.1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England completed a review of Essex County Council divisions, with the revised boundaries implemented for the 2026 county elections. Bishop Hall Lane moved from Springfield, to Chelmsford West county division. Following an interim polling district review in 2025 to accommodate the new county boundaries, the street was transferred from Springfield Chelmer to Rectory Lane polling district for those elections. The only properties on Bishop Hall Lane are blocks of student halls of residence, currently accounting for approximately 40 registered electors. Students may be eligible to register at both their home and term-time addresses, subject to meeting the residence requirements at each. This does not permit voting more than once in the same election.

2.2. A review of Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries was due ahead of the 2027 City Council elections. It had been anticipated that this might align the city ward boundary with the revised county division boundary at Bishop Hall Lane, although no outcome was guaranteed. The review was cancelled following the announcement of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). With LGR subsequently postponed, the City Council elections are again due in 2027, on existing ward boundaries. The polling district arrangements must therefore be amended to reflect the existing boundaries.

2.3. The Council completed a full compulsory review of polling districts and polling places across the city in 2024, followed by an interim review in 2025 to accommodate the revised Essex County Council division boundaries. A compulsory review is undertaken every five years to examine polling districts and polling places

comprehensively. The next full review is scheduled for 2028/29.

2.4. Given the continuing uncertainty over LGR and the future configuration of councils in Essex, a further comprehensive review is not considered appropriate at this stage. A wider review would be better informed once the outcome and future electoral boundaries are known, allowing polling arrangements to be considered together on that basis. In the meantime, the Council must make this targeted amendment to ensure that the forthcoming elections can be administered on existing City Council ward boundaries.

3. Proposal

3.1. It is proposed to transfer Bishop Hall Lane from Rectory Lane polling district back to Springfield Chelmer polling district ahead of the May 2027 elections. This restores the street's previous polling district allocation and aligns it with the existing City Council ward boundary, including the street in The Lawns ward.

3.2. The polling station for Rectory Lane polling district is Essex Boys and Girls Club. The polling station for Springfield Chelmer polling district is Springfield Hall Park Clubhouse. Under the proposal, Bishop Hall Lane electors voting in person would return to Springfield Hall Park Clubhouse. No new polling station is proposed.

3.3. A notice commencing the targeted review was published on 4 November 2026, inviting comments from any interested parties or stakeholders. The Acting Returning Officer for the Chelmsford constituency commented in support of the proposals:

'As the Acting Returning Officer for the Chelmsford constituency, I support the proposed polling district boundary changes, which align the polling district boundaries with the Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries for the upcoming election.'

3.4. No other comments have been received at the time of publication of this report. Officers will continue to monitor responses until the closing date and report any comments received subsequently to the Committee before it determines the proposal.

3.5. Subject to the Committee's approval, the changes will be reflected on the published register on 1st December 2026. Affected electors will be informed of the change, and poll cards will identify Springfield Hall Park Clubhouse as their polling station. In addition, notices can be displayed at the entrances to the accommodation blocks nearer the election. These would highlight the change of venue and explain postal and proxy voting options, including how to apply and the relevant deadlines.

4. Conclusion

4.1. The transfer of Bishop Hall Lane back to Springfield Chelmer polling district is necessary to align polling arrangements with the existing City Council ward boundaries for the May 2027 elections. It restores the arrangements in place before the 2026 county elections without altering electoral boundaries or undertaking a

wider review prematurely.

4.2. The Council has already completed a full review in 2024 and an interim review in 2025, and a further comprehensive review would be better considered once the future arrangements arising from Local Government Reorganisation are known. The Committee is therefore asked to approve the proposed change so that the May 2027 elections can be administered on the correct ward boundaries, with a full review to follow in accordance with the statutory review timetable.

List of appendices:

None

Background papers:

Electoral Commission Guidance – Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

Corporate Implications

Corporate Implication	Response
Legal/Constitutional	Under Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council has a duty to keep polling districts and polling places under review and may undertake interim reviews between compulsory review periods where local circumstances require it. Responsibility for exercising the Council's polling district review functions is delegated through the Council's Constitution to the Governance Committee.
Financial	No significant financial implications arise from the proposal. Any costs associated with updating electoral records, poll cards and elector communications will be met from existing budgets.
Potential impact on climate change and the environment	No direct impact on climate change or the environment has been identified.
Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030	No direct contribution to achieving net zero has been identified.
Personnel	None. The proposal will be implemented by existing staff.
Risk Management	Failure to amend the polling district could result in a mismatch between polling district arrangements and City Council ward boundaries for the 2027 elections. The proposal mitigates this risk and ensures electoral arrangements remain accurate.
Equality and Diversity	Electors will continue to have reasonable access to a polling station.
Health and Safety	No specific health and safety implications have been identified.

Digital	Electoral management systems, mapping records and the electoral register will require updating to reflect the approved polling district amendment.
Other	None.

Equality Impact Assessment

Assessment of impact

Using the information above, assess if the policy / function could potentially disproportionately impact on different protected groups.

Specify if the potential impact is positive, could adversely impact or if there is no impact. If an adverse impact, indicate how the impact will be mitigated.

Please note any data used in the impact assessment should be anonymised and with due regard given to data privacy in line with GDPR.

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Age What will the impact be on different age groups such as younger or older people?		Yes – potential		The longer journey could affect some electors because of age-related mobility needs. The only property affected is student halls; this does not establish residents' ages or access needs.	Both venues are fully accessible and within a 15-minute walk of the street. Clearly notify electors of the change and offer assistance with access enquiries.
Disability Consider all disabilities such as hearing loss, dyslexia etc as well as access issues for wheelchair users where appropriate		Yes – potential		The increased distance could disadvantage electors with mobility impairments. Both venues are fully accessible and within a 15-minute walk, although individual journey times and needs vary.	Maintain accessible premises and voting assistance; provide clear information and respond to individual access needs. Explain postal and proxy voting options without treating them as a substitute for accessible in-person voting.

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Pregnancy and maternity Pregnant women and new and breastfeeding Mums			No specific impact identified.		
Marriage or Civil Partnership Could this policy discriminate on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership			No specific impact identified.		
Sex Is the service used by people of both male and female biological characteristics or intersex and are the sexes given equal opportunity?			No specific impact identified.		
Gender reassignment Is there an impact on people who are going through or who have completed Gender Reassignment?			No specific impact identified.		

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Additionally, is there an impact on people with different gender identity?					
Religion or belief Includes not having religion or belief			No specific impact identified.		
Sexual Orientation What is the impact on people of different sexual orientation such heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual people?			No specific impact identified.		
Race Includes ethnic or national origins			No specific impact identified.		

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Are there any other groups who could find it difficult to access or make use of the policy / function? For example: low income / people living in rural areas / single parents / carers and the cared for / past offenders / long-term unemployed / housebound / history of domestic abuse / people who don't speak English as a first language / people without computer access etc.			No additional specific impact identified.		

Public Representations on Equality Impacts

The review notice published on 4 November 2026 invited comments until 16 November 2026. None had been received at report publication. Officers will monitor responses and report any access or equality concerns to the Committee before its decision.

Equality Impact Assessment Conclusion

Decision	Explanation
☐ **Continue the policy with no changes**	Continue the policy with no changes. The amendment is mandatory to align polling district arrangements with the existing City Council ward boundaries.

[For example: evidence suggests no potential for discrimination / all opportunities have been taken to advance equality.]	Measures to support anyone who may be affected are already set out in the report and assessment, including accessible polling facilities, clear notification of the venue change and information about postal and proxy voting.
☐ **Continue the policy with adjustments** *[For example: Low risk of negative impact / actions or adjustments would further improve positives or remove a potential negative impact.]*	
☐ **Adverse impact but continue** *[For example: Negative impact has been objectively justified.]*	
☐ **Suspend or withdraw the policy for further review / consideration of alternative proposals** *[For example: High risk of negative impact for any group / insufficient evidence / need to involve or consult with protected groups / negative impact which cannot be mitigated or justified / unlawful discrimination etc.]*	

Consultees:

Any interested members of the public are invited to comment. The Acting Returning Officer for Chelmsford.

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

None.

Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

18 November 2026

Work Programme

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Officer Contact:

Lorraine Browne, Monitoring Officer, tel:01245 606560, email: lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to receive members' comments on the Committee's future work programme.

Recommendations

Members are invited to comment on the Committee's work programme, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, and make any necessary amendments to it.

Summary of Key Points

- The Work Programme is reviewed by Committee members at each meeting.
- Members are asked to propose agenda items for future meetings or to note the items on the programme.

1. Background

1.1. The Work Programme is reviewed by the Committee at each meeting. The current version is attached at Appendix 1 to this report and includes the proposed work for future meetings, based on the Programme content for recent years.

2. Conclusion

2.1. Members are invited to comment on the Committee's work programme and make any necessary amendments to it.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Governance Committee Work Programme

Background papers:

None

Corporate Implications

Corporate Implication	Response
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

Equality Impact Assessment

No Equality Impact Assessment required as a standard report for noting.

Consultees:

None

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

None

Governance Committee Work Programme **Appendix 1**

November 2026

Monitoring Officer report

Annual SIRO report

Annual SRA RIPA report

Annual Employee ROI report

Boundary update/polling district review in readiness for 2027 elections

January 2027

Monitoring Officer report (including proposals for training and induction of potentially new members following 2027 elections)

Annual Member ROI report

Annual Member/Officer Gifts/Hospitality report

Annual Whistleblowing report

Review of Constitution (includes Officer Employment Rules)

March 2027

Committee Training session – hearings (note: training session for new committee members will be scheduled for prior to June 2027 meeting)

Next municipal year

Annual constitution review and update

LGSCO complaint handling code update

Potential review of complaints processes

<u>Ad hoc reports</u>

Politically exempt posts

Dispensations

Training