



**MINUTES of
COUNCIL
12 DECEMBER 2024**

PRESENT

Chairperson Councillor K M H Lagan

Vice-Chairperson Councillor R G Pratt

Councillors M G Bassenger, V J Bell, D O Bown, S J Burwood, J Driver,
M F L Durham, CC, A Fittock, A S Fluker, L J Haywood,
J C Hughes, A M Lay, W J Laybourn, S J N Morgan,
C P Morley, R H Siddall, U C G Siddall-Norman,
N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, W Stamp, CC, E L Stephens,
J C Stilts, N J Swindle and M E Thompson

442. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through some general housekeeping arrangements for the meeting.

443. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Jennings, N R Miller, M G Neall, N G F Shaughnessy, S White and L L Wiffen.

444. MINUTES - 14 NOVEMBER 2024

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14 November 2024 be approved and confirmed.

445. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor L J Haywood declared a non-registrable interest in Agenda Item 16 Appointment of Parish Councillor to the Joint Standards Committee as one of the candidates was on the same Parish Council as her.

446. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

447. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairperson advised of the recent death of Ron Harper a D-Day veteran who had played a key part both in D-Day and the commemoration earlier this year.

Members were also informed of the sad passing of former Councillor Shelia Young, aged 99. At this point the Chairperson referred to Councillor M F L Durham who paid tribute to former Councillor Young who had represented the Wickham Bishops and Woodham Ward. He highlighted the great contributions she made both to the Parish and District Council and had been Chairperson of the Maldon District Council from 2008 until 2010. She would be greatly missed.

At the invitation of the Chairperson, all present stood for a few moments of quiet reflection in memory of Ron Harper and former Councillor Young.

The Chairperson thanked everyone that had attended and helped to facilitate the staff event held earlier in this week.

Members were reminded of the recent skatepark consultation and award of new facilities in both Maldon and Burnham-on-Crouch. The Chairperson reported how this work had been managed and led by Melissa Curtis, Capital Projects Manager, and her team and he expressed his thanks to them. He advised that the Council had received over 16,000 social media engagements and the projects had been widely received across the District.

The Chairperson advised that he would be suspending the need to stand in accordance with Rule 8(3) of the Constitution.

At this point it was noted that some Christmas Cards were on display in the Members' Room.

448. STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 21 NOVEMBER 2024

The Council considered the recommendations coming forward from the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 21 November 2024.

Fees and Charges Schedule 2025 / 26

Councillor J Driver, Vice-Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee (S&R) presented the recommendation coming forward from the Committee in relation to the Fees and Charges Schedule. This was duly seconded.

Councillor E L Stephens raised a number of queries in respect of the Fees and Charges Schedule and in response to these the Chairperson advised that Officers would provide a response outside of the meeting.

There was some concern raised regarding charges relating to funerals, deaths and memorial plaques specifically when people were struggling financially, and in response Councillor M F L Durham (Chairperson of the S&R) advised that these had been discussed by the Finance Working Group and then approved by the S&R. The concerns raised were supported by other Members of the Council.

Some Members of the Council expressed concern about items with the Fees and Charges Schedule, advising that they would not support the 2025 / 26 Schedule.

The Chairperson put the proposal in the name of Councillor Driver to the Council. Upon a vote being taken this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that with the exception of the car parking and pontoon charges in Burnham-on-Crouch, the detailed Fees and Charges Schedule for 2025 / 26 as set out in Appendix A to the Council agenda be agreed, following the Council's approval of the Fees and Charges Policy on 24 October 2024.

449. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council noted the list of Committees that had met before and since the last meeting of the Council, up until Wednesday 4 December 2024 for which Minutes had been published.

450. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE 6(3) OF WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN

There were none.

451. PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP REVIEW OF THE MALDON AND HEYBRIDGE CENTRAL AREA MASTERPLAN

The Council considered the report of the Planning Policy Working Group (PPWG) presenting its recommendations following Councillor J C Stilts' Motion to the Council on 14 December 2023.

Councillor A Fittock, Chairperson of the PPWG, introduced the report, explaining of the PPWG had been tasked with reviewing the Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Master Plan (CAMP) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) following Councillor Stilts' Motion to the Council (set out in the report). He advised that as part of its review the PPWG had carried out visits of the site and masterplan areas. He then referred to the Principal Place Officer who took Members through the report which provided background information regarding the CAMP SPD and a timeline of the work undertaken by the PPWG.

Appendix 1 to the report set out the 11 projects which had actions and timelines to progress to 2027 and Appendix 2 detailed the four options presented to the PPWG to inform a recommendation back to the Council. Consequentially the PPWG had requested separate, structured site visits to three sub-areas to better understand how the CAMP projects were meeting the Local Development Plan (LDP) Strategic Policy S5 Objectives. Appendix 3 provided information relating to the site visits undertaken. It was noted that the PPWG would continue to review strategic objectives via the LDP reviews. A CAMP Review all Member briefing had taken place on 16 October 2024 where the PPWG conclusions, set out in the report, were presented.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations set out in the report and these were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan Action Plan work is permitted to continue until after the Local Development Plan (LDP) Review is completed;
- (ii) That the Maldon and Heybridge Central Area Masterplan is reviewed for relevance thereafter as part of LDP Review or subsequent processes.

452. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S NET ZERO CARBON EMISSIONS TRAJECTORY AND AMBITIONS

The Council considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive updating Members on the work and considerations of the Net-Zero Working Group in relation to the Council's current ambition to be 'a carbon neutral District and a Net Zero Council by 2030'. The report also sought agreement from Members to revise the Council's current ambition to ensure that it could be delivered practicably with regards to existing legal agreements, available budget / resources and available technology. Revisions to the Council's Climate Action Strategy 2021 – 2030 were sought to ensure it accurately reflected the actions being taken by the Council to achieve net zero.

The report reminded Members of the report presented to the Council in July 2024 on the Council's net-zero carbon emissions, including the Council's baseline emissions and an outline of the potential challenges which may prevent the Council from achieving net-zero by 2030. At this meeting a Member and Officer Net-Zero Working Group (the Working Group) has been set up to consider the Council's route to net-zero and make recommendations to the Council on its strategy for achieving net-zero.

The Chairperson of the Working Group, Councillor J C Stilts, referred to the Head of Environmental Health, Waste and Climate Action who presented the report and the recommendations of the Working Group which included the adoption of a revised Climate Emergency Statement, set out in Appendix A to the report. If this Statement was agreed Officers would undertake a full revision of the current Climate Action Strategy to ensure it contained clear and measurable milestones for the reduction of Council emissions along with a review of the existing Climate Pledges.

The Chairperson then put the recommendations as set out in the report and this was duly seconded.

In response to questions raised during the debate, the Head of Climate Environmental Health, Waste and Climate Action advised that:

- the Council was working on developing clear milestones with measurable targets across its three biggest carbon emitters and through the Working Group this would be clearly outlined in the Climate Action Strategy.
- the Essex Waste Strategy, discussed by the Council earlier this year, outlined the intention of Essex County Council (ECC) to incinerate some waste. It was noted that the Council would continue to feed into this Strategy alongside its Essex partners.
- the amendments to the Climate Emergency Statement were to assist in ensuring that the Council had a clear Climate Action Strategy that delivered net-zero and was clear and transparent.

The Leader of the Council highlighted the difficulty faced by the Council regarding waste vehicles and the limited options currently available. Councillor M F L Durham clarified at this point that ECC was responsible for the disposal of waste and that it had signed a contract to stop landfilling from 2025.

Councillor Stilts thanked the Members and Officers on the Working Group for their hard work and assured the Council that it had discussed in detail the timeline for working to net-zero.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations set out in the report which were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members considered and noted the challenges and barriers identified by the Net-Zero Working Group which were likely to prevent the Council fully decarbonising its assets and activities by 2030;
- (ii) That with consideration of these issues, and with regard to the current national and county policy agenda, that the Council agrees to adopt and publish the revised Climate Emergency Statement attached in **Appendix A** to the report;
- (iii) That that the Climate Action Strategy 2021-2030 be revised to include a series of published milestones that will set out how the Council will reduce emissions as and when it is able to practicably do so but by no later than 2050;
- (iv) That Officers revise the current 'Climate Pledges' within the Climate Action Strategy and Climate Action Plan to ensure that they remain relevant to residents, businesses and community groups;
- (v) That the revised Climate Action Strategy be brought back to the Council for consideration and adoption in Spring 2025.

453. CORPORATE PLAN REVIEW

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive seeking Members' approval of the revised Corporate Plan 2025 – 2028, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The current Corporate Plan (the Plan) was approved by the Council in February 2023 and set out the strategic vision, priorities and objectives for the period 2023 / 2027. Service plans, reported through the performance framework aligned Officer delivered activities and work. The Plan was also used as a policy framework in shaping the Council's annual budget to resource the delivery of key priorities as identified in the Plan. It was noted that as the current plan was coming to the end of its second year a review, involving Officers and Members, had been undertaken. It was noted that the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee would continue to monitor all key performance indicators.

The Leader of the Council introduced the Plan for 2025 - 2028 and commended the work of the Assistant Director - Strategy, Partnerships and Communications and her team in the review of the Plan. He explained that heart of the plan was about delivering a good quality of service within the Council along with a good quality of life.

The Assistant Director then presented the report to the Council, highlighting the main changes proposed, which had been incorporated. These included a reduction in priorities from six to five and the language used simplified to help all stakeholders understand the action the Council would take along with what actions would be achieved both for the local authority and the District. In light of these changes the date of the Plan had been reset to 2025 – 2028 and would be a three-year plan.

The Chief Executive explained that the Plan set out the Council's strategic commitment regarding improving the quality of life for residents, people who work and visit the District. The Plan could be used as a supporting document when the Council bid for funding from the Government and other external funding bodies.

The Chairperson then put the recommendations set out in the report and this was duly seconded.

During the debate that followed and in response to some comments raised regarding the challenges facing and investing in the district the Chairperson advised that these had been noted but did not directly relate to the Corporate Plan review. The Assistant Director advised that the Council had an extensive evidence base, informed by the Office of National Statistics and other bodies.

The Chairperson then moved the recommendations which were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the revised Corporate Plan 2025 - 2028 attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved;
- (ii) That the Corporate Plan 2025 - 2028 will be brought back to the Council if there are any significant changes or new requirements to consider.

454. COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Council considered the report of the Interim Chief Finance Officer which sought agreement of the tax base for the financial year 2025 / 26 in order to set the Council's council tax requirement. It was noted that the Council had to notify its tax base calculations to Essex County Council, Essex Fire Authority, the Police & Crime Commissioner for Essex and Parish / Town Councils in order that they can also set their council tax for 2025 / 26.

It was noted that annual setting of the Council's tax base was a pre-requisite for all local authorities under the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Appendices to the report set out the calculation of the tax base (Appendix A) and the tax base for each Parish / Town Council (Appendix B).

The report provided an update on the current collection rate and reduction in the number of local council tax support cases. It was noted that the Council Tax Base figure for 2025 / 26 represented an increase of 1.72% and this related to the rise in the number of chargeable properties, a decrease in the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, less a slight decrease in the expected collection rate.

The Interim Chief Financial Officer took Members through the report and provided some additional background information to the information detailed.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation as set out in the report. This was duly seconded and agreed.

RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012 the amount calculated by Maldon District Council as its council tax base for the 2025 / 26 year shall be set at **26,854.4**.

455. CONSULTATION RESPONSE - REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive seeking Members' agreement of a formal response on behalf of the Council to the Government consultation on remote attendance and proxy voting.

Members were advised of the Government consultation seeking views on the detail and practical implications of allowing remote and hybrid attendance at Local Authority meetings. Views were also sought on the possible introduction of proxy voting for these

occasions when an elected Member, due to personal circumstances, may be unable to attend, even remotely. The Consultation was due to close on 19 December 2024. A consultation response on behalf of the Council had been drafted and was attached as Appendix A to the report.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and advised that all Group Leaders had been engaged and broadly felt that the Council should support remote attendance for cases of exceptional circumstances and proxy voting not be supported as this would present issues, particularly in the case of Committees like planning. He thanked the Lead Legal Specialist & Monitoring Officer and Assistant Director – Programmes, Performance and Governance for their assistance in producing the response.

In response to a query, the Leader of the Council advised that the comment detailed to question 7 in Appendix A should read "...code of conduct to say private meetings should not be done in a *public* location". This was noted.

During the debate that followed some comments were raised by Members and the Chairperson advised that each Member had the opportunity to also respond to this consultation as an individual.

Councillor J C Stilts proposed that the Council's response be amended to state that even if a Member was attending remotely they could not vote. This amendment was duly seconded and agreed.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out in the report with the amendment to question 7 as detailed above and the further agreed amendment from Councillor Stilts. This was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the above amendment to question 7 and clarification that if a Member was attending remotely they could not vote, the draft consultation response to the Government consultation on remote attendance and proxy voting, attached at Appendix A to the report, be endorsed.

456. WASTE CONTRACT TASK AND FINISH GROUP - MEMBER ATTENDANCE

The Council considered the report of the Assistant Director - Place and Community seeking Members' nomination of two or more additional Member representatives on the Waste Contract Task and Finish Group (the Group).

The report provided background information following the reconvening of the Group in November 2024 to consider the 2025 / 26 savings proposals put forward in relation to Green Waste and Refuse Collections. Due to the number of Members that attended the last meeting of the Group and its quorum arrangements, additional Member representatives were being sought to ensure the Group achieved quorum and was both effective and robust when considering the 2025 / 26 waste savings proposals.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and then following this, the Assistant Director - Place and Community provided the Council with additional information in relation to the request to expand the Member representation on the Group.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations as set out in the report and these were duly seconded.

The following proposals, duly seconded, were then made to expand the Member representation on the Group:

- Councillor A S Fluker proposed Councillor C P Morley.
- Councillor W Stamp proposed Councillor J C Stilts.
- Councillor M F L Durham proposed Councillor J Driver.
- Councillor Driver proposed Councillor P L Spenceley
- The Leader of the Council suggested that the group be politically balanced and proposed Councillor A M Lay and E L Stephens.

The Chairperson then put that Councillors J Driver, A M Lay, C P Morley, P L Spenceley, E L Stephens and J C Stilts be added to the membership of the Waste Contract Task and Finish Group. This was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council agrees to expand Member representation on the Waste Contract Task and Finish Group;
- (ii) That Councillors J Driver, A M Lay, C P Morley, P L Spenceley, E L Stephens and J C Stilts be added to the membership of the Waste Contract Task and Finish Group.

457. APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCILLOR TO THE JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Council considered the report of the Monitoring Officer seeking appointment of a Parish Councillor to the vacant seat on the Joint Standards Committee (JSC).

Following the resignation of Councillor P Davey from Althorne Parish Council there was a vacancy on the JSC. Following a request from the Monitoring Officer for nominations from all Parish / Town Councillors two Parish Councillors had expressed an interest in the role. They were Councillor Michael J Hall and Councillor Robert Harding. A summary of both Councillors' experience had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

It was noted that the current vacancy needed to be filled to ensure that the JSC had a complete membership in line with the Council's constitution.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation as set out in the report and this was duly seconded. He then put forward the names of both candidates and upon a vote being taken it was agreed that Councillor Michael J Hall was appointed to the JSC.

RESOLVED that Parish Councillor Michael J Hall be appointed to the Joint Standards Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

458. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2025 / 26

The Council considered the report of the Assistant Director – Programmes, Performance and Governance presenting for Members' consideration the draft Schedule of Meetings for 2025 / 26 (attached as Appendix 1 to the report).

The Chairperson put the recommendation as set out in the report and this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the Schedule of Meetings for the 2025 / 26 municipal year be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

459. 2024 / 25 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Chairperson referred Members to the agenda for this meeting which detailed the request to consider moving the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee meeting scheduled for Thursday 6 March 2025 to Thursday 20 February 2025. It was noted that this request was to allow the Committee to meet deadlines relating to the 2023 / 24 Accounts. This was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee meeting scheduled for Thursday 6 March 2025 be moved to Thursday 20 February 2025.

460. QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE 1 (3)(M)

Councillor W Stamp asked the Leader of the Council if he would agree with her and thank the finance team for producing, finalising and signing off the 2021 / 22 and 2022 / 23 accounts. She commented on the hard work of the team to get this work done. In response, the Leader of the Council agreed and thanked the finance team for getting the Council up to date, he also referred to the new Interim Chief Financial Officer who had recently joined the Council and the work he was doing.

Councillor W Stamp referred to proposed introduction of car parking charges for Burnham-on-Crouch and asked the Leader of the Council if he would agree there was a lack of consultation regarding local businesses and sports clubs within the town when these costs were put forward to the Council. She explained that people visited Burnham-on-Crouch for tourism and free parking and that the town didn't have the same facilities as Maldon. Councillor Stamp asked that it be recorded that bringing parking charges to Burnham-on-Crouch would have a retrograde step to the economy and more consultation was needed. In response the Leader agreed the importance to take into account public opinions and reminded how he had put forward the recommendation at the Strategy and Resources Committee to delay approval of those fees and charges for further consideration. He advised that if the Finance and Car Parking Working Groups decided further consultation was required, he would support this. The Leader noted that no decision on car parking charges at Burnham-on-Crouch had been made at this time.

Councillor A S Fluker referred to a comment made by the Leader of the Council regarding turning land in Burnham-on-Crouch into housing at the last meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee and asked whether he stood by this. In response the Leader advised that this comment was a response to a separate statement and there was no plan for any such development.

Councillor Siddal-Norman, referring to car parks in Burnham-on-Crouch, asked the Leader of the Council if he realised that one of the car parks was not a shoppers car park but the car park for the doctor's surgery. She commented on the importance to have car parking for people using the surgery. In response, the Leader referred to the doctor's car park being owned by the Council and that this had to be maintained, a cost that the Council had to pay. He advised that the Council would be flexible as it developed policies, and reminded the Council that a decision had not yet been made in respect of charging for car parking in Burnham-on-Crouch.

Councillor J S Stilts asked the Leader of the Council if he agreed that the Council should be thanking the volunteers that tirelessly looked after the Council's cemeteries. The Leader of the Council agreed and commented on the importance of thanking volunteers for helping the Council look after the cemeteries and such spaces.

Councillor M F L Durham referred to the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and publication of the Devolution White Paper expected and asked the Leader of the Council if any allowance had been made in the Corporate Plan and other documents if it came out in the publication that Essex was to undertake local government reform ahead of other areas. The Leader read out a statement he had given that day and advised how he was extremely disappointed to see that the housing target imposed on the Council as part of the Government's NPPF had dramatically increased. He commented on the impact this would have on the local community and the Local Plan which was being developed. The Council would continue to work closely with Essex County Council and partners to ensure that the infrastructure was delivered now and in the future. He referred to the increases seen across all Councils and the pressure this would put on Local Authorities.

Councillor P L Spenceley referred to questions raised by members of the public at the last Council meeting and advised the Council of an email sent from the Head of Heybridge Primary School to all parents raising concern regarding highway safety outside of the school. She asked the Leader to provide an update on the progress made with regards to safety improvements on Broad Street Green Road so that she could update her residents. In response the Leader advised that he would provide Councillor Stilts with a written response.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 9.11 pm.

K M H LAGAN
CHAIRPERSON