



**MINUTES of
PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
22 JANUARY 2026**

PRESENT

Chairperson	Councillor W Stamp, CC
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor N D Spenceley
Councillors	M G Bassenger, S J Burwood, J C Hughes, M G Neall, R G Pratt, U G C Siddall-Norman, M E Thompson and S J N Morgan (Substitute for D O Bown)

446. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Officers attending both in person and remotely. She also welcomed Emma Larcombe from KPMG (External Auditors) and went through some general housekeeping arrangements for the meeting.

447. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D O Bown and Mr Smith (Independent Person). In accordance with notice duly given it was noted that Councillor S J N Morgan was attending as a substitute for Councillor Bown.

448. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 November 2025 be approved and confirmed.

449. MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted the matters arising from the last meeting.

450. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were none.

451. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

452. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

At this point the Chairperson advised that she would be altering the order of business and Agenda Item 14 – Any other items of business that the Chairperson of the Committee decides are urgent, would be considered following Item 7 – Community Safety Partnership Engagement and Activities.

453. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIVITIES

The Committee received a presentation from the Community Safety Partnership Manager which highlighted the role of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and detailed the Community Safety priorities for 2025 / 26 noting that the priorities for 2026 / 27 were due to be agreed in March 2026.

The presentation provided details of specific projects that the CSP had been involved with, noting that they had been fully funded externally from various bodies. These projects included:

- The Promenade Park, Maldon: Make Space for Girls and Improving Public Safety - funded by the Essex Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) Safer Streets Programme. This project was part of the work being done to make green spaces safer and more inclusive for girls and gender diverse young people. It was noted that the monies had also been used for stake park procurement in the West Maldon Community Centre, Riverside Park and Promenade Park and the Secret Garden. The CSP Manager explained the key project benefits for each of the projects and how young people had been involved in the design.
- Her Place, Burnham-on-Crouch – funded by the Rural England Prosperity Fund, Essex PFCC Safer Streets Programme and Maldon CSP reserves. Consultation with year 9 students from Ormiston Rivers Academy had taken place and following production of a report, Burnham-on-Crouch Town Council and youth commissioners had been consulted. The funding would provide new assets for young people and ensure that any provision was more gender inclusive.
- Maldon Women's Safety Charter – funded by the Essex PFCC Safer Streets Programme and Maldon CSP reserves. Businesses were encouraged to sign up to the charter and make pledges to improve women's safety and encourage active bystandership. The CSP Manager outlined the key areas of the Charter and how this would build a safer and stronger community in the Maldon District. A launch event along with bespoke training and support for businesses was planned. Members were advised that a media campaign using a video filmed on location in the Maldon District to nudge behaviour and encourage active bystandership had been produced. The Officer agreed to provide Members with a copy of this.

The CSP Manager outlined a number of next steps that the CSP was striving to achieve for the future, including seeking opportunities to influence planning design, reviewing current play and sport to ensure gender inclusivity and embracing working with local schools and encouraging the use of green spaces.

In response to questions raised the CSP Manager advised that:

- forms of lighting within shelters where they were located away from residential premises would be looked into;

- during consultations with young people, phone charging facilities, roller staking and 'funky' chairs by the river (in Burnham-on-Crouch) had also been raised and would be investigated;
- Chelmsford Central Park had recently installed some bright coloured sun loungers with tables beside them which had proven very popular with young people, the Officer agreed to circulate details of these to Members.
- wi-fi and phone charging were important to young people and the Officer confirmed that they would try to accommodate these where possible. In response to a question regarding wi-fi being standard at all such areas, the Officer advised he would make enquiries in respect of this.

The Chairperson thanked the CSP Manager for his presentation.

454. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE DECIDES ARE URGENT

The Chairperson announced that in accordance with Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 she had agreed to allow the Director of Finance to raise an urgent item of business which required consideration prior to the next meeting of the Committee in March 2026.

455. DRAFT AUDIT FINDINGS (ISA 260) 2024 / 25

The Committee considered the urgent report of the Director of Finance presenting the detailed outcomes of the audit of the 2024 / 25 accounts ahead of the backstop date of 27 February 2026.

The Director of Finance introduced the report, referring to the requested delegated powers, which he advised was not expected and assured Members that should anything significant be identified this would be referred back to the Committee, as appropriate. He advised that Maldon District Council was ahead of other Councils in Essex in terms of the progress made on the 2024 / 25 accounts and hoped over the next 12 months that the Council would reach the best possible outcome for the audit of 2025 / 26.

Ms Larcombe, from KPMG (External Audit) presented the draft Audit Findings Report (AFR) attached at Appendix 1 to the report, detailing the auditors' conclusions regarding the Council's accounts and the arrangements in place to secure Value for Money. She advised Members that in respect of the Audit fee there were some additional fees which they were in the progress of agreeing with the Director of Finance. Ms Larcombe commended the Council's finance team on its work to get to current position.

A table within the report summarised the two areas of review and highlighted any issues raised. It was noted that clear progress was shown and evidenced the high standard to which the accounts had been prepared to.

It was noted that reference within Appendix 1 to Burnham Gold Club should be Burnham *Golf* Club.

Ms Larcombe advised that she was expecting all build back assurance work to be concluded next year and that the Council's management team was looking into valuation of the Council's property portfolio as this was a key aspect. The Director of

Finance confirmed that the Council was working with the Valuation Office in respect of this and carrying out a valuation on all Council assets for 2025 / 26.

In response to a comment regarding retention of knowledge, the Director highlighted changes to the finance team and the work being undertaken to ensure that knowledge was retained.

During the debate and in response to a query regarding the short-term investment mentioned in Appendix 2 it was explained that this related to a misclassification that had been picked up and corrected, there were no changes in terms of the accounts. Members were reminded that the Council agreed its Treasury Management Practices each year and advice in respect of them was taken from Link (external advisors).

Ms Larcombe explained that the letter attached as Appendix 2 to the report was a requirement on every single audit to confirm that management had provided the auditor with all information requested. It was brought to this Committee as it approved the annual Statement of Accounts.

The Committee offered their congratulations to the Director of Finance and his team for their work on the accounts.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations detailed in the report. This was duly seconded and agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Committee reviewed the draft Audit Findings Report (AFR) from (i)KPMG (Appendix 1 to the report) and the details of their audit findings for the financial statements of accounts for 2024/25;
- (ii) that the Committee considered the draft letter of representation (Appendix 2 to the report);
- (iii) That the Director of Finance (S151 Officer) is granted delegated powers to approve any remaining changes to the 2024/25 accounts recommended by the auditor in consultation with the Chairperson of this Committee, in order for the accounts to be signed off by the backstop date of 27 February 2026;
- (iv) That the Committee receives the final signed version of the accounts for 2024/25 at its meeting on 12 March 2026.

456. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 2

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive that required the Committee to undertake a quarterly review of the Corporate Performance as assurance that delivery was being managed effectively.

The Chairperson introduced the report and deferred to the Head of Performance, Improvement and LGR to present the detail. The Head of Performance advised that the report covered Corporate Performance from July to the end of September 2025 and highlighted that overall, all five priorities were on track for delivery at the end of September 2025. Members' attention was drawn to the graph shown at Appendix 1 - page 18, which detailed that one of the 57 indicators was marked as 'at risk' with a further three 'closer monitoring'. The detail behind this and a full breakdown was provided in Appendix 1 along with the data that sat behind the ratings.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations as set out in the report. These were duly seconded and agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members reviewed the information as set out in this report and Appendix 1 to the report with priority focus given to the Strategic Priority level performance;
- (ii) That Members were assured through this review that corporate performance was being managed effectively.

457. REVIEW OF CORPORATE RISK - QUARTER 2

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive that required the Committee to undertake a quarterly review of the Corporate Risk Register as assurance that corporate risks were being managed effectively.

The Chairperson introduced the report and deferred to the Head of Performance, Improvement and LGR to present the details. The Head of Performance, Improvement and LGR advised that the report covered the Corporate Risk Register from July to the end of September 2025 and how the Register was regularly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team. The report highlighted where there had been changes to Risks during this period with further details of each risk and the full Risk Register set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The Corporate Risk Mitigating Actions were set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

During the debate that ensued, the following information was provided by Officers in response to queries raised:

- It was confirmed that the Council kept a record if anyone was suing it for damages as this affected disclosure in the accounts around contingent liabilities.
- The Head of Service advised that the recent changes to the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had led to a refocus and review of the risk register which had resulted in changes to risk classifications and therefore some risks scores had been reduced. The Chief Executive explained that having considered the definitions for risk scoring and not wanting to overscore risks, SLT had reviewed all risks and agreed on the outcomes reported. The Chief Executive confirmed that Directors had agreed all changes and would be taking responsibility for the revisions made.
- **Risk 4: Damage caused to the Council's reputation associated with delays to planned infrastructure delivery in the District by third parties which was due to mitigate approved development** – In response to concerns raised regarding the new scoring for this risk the Director of Place, Planning and Growth explained that the planning system could only deal with mitigating the additional pressure not an existing backlog. He referred to debate at recent planning Committee meetings regarding the impact on new and piecemeal development not delivering infrastructure in a timely way. The Director explained that this risk was in relation to whether the Council was sitting on funds and not able to spend them, opposed to the reputation of the Council when funds were not being spent due to other organisations such as highways / education, for example.
- **Risk 8: Unable to recruit and retain staff with specific skills sets in specialist areas to meet the demands of the service** – In response to a

specific question regarding Planning Officers, the Director of Place, Planning and Growth provided Members with an update on current staffing within the team, noting that there had recently been some internal promotions. He explained that he was currently discussing a recruitment campaign with the Human Resources team which would specifically highlight the benefits of working for Maldon District Council.

- **Risk 5: Failure to maintain a Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS)** – The Director of Place, Planning and Growth drew Members' attention to the footnote within the update to this risk reporting on the updated 5YHLS calculation reported to the Planning Policy Working Group in December 2025 showing a supply of 4.14 years. This would be coming forward to a future meeting of the Council for endorsement.

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

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members reviewed the Corporate Risk Register in Appendix 1 to the report and provided comment and feedback for consideration;
- (ii) That Members reviewed progress of the Corporate Risk Mitigating actions in Appendix 2 and provided comment and feedback for consideration;
- (iii) that Members were assured through this review that corporate risk was being managed effectively;
- (iv) that Members challenged risk where the Committee felt that the Council's corporate goals may not be achieved;
- (v) That the wording of Risk 6 to changed from, Failure to meet the affordable housing need, to and more accurately represent the corporate risk to the Council: 'Unable to secure sufficient and appropriately sized affordable housing to meet local need due to market conditions, development viability, and reliance on external delivery partners from Quarter Three 2025/26'.

458. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTIONS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive updating Members on the actions identified in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

The Chairperson introduced the report and deferred to the Head of Performance, Improvement and LGR to present the details. It was noted that each year the AGS reflected on the Council's governance arrangements and identified further best practice improvements that could be introduced for the following year. The Head of Performance highlighted the actions in relation to governance best practice identified by the Council in the 2024 / 25 AGS. The report provided detail for each of the actions, and it was noted that of the six actions two had previously been reported as completed and were highlighted in grey. A further action 'Transforming Together Programme...' was now complete and commentary updates provided for the open actions.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation in the report. This was duly seconded and agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that the Committee reviewed the Annual Governance Statements table detailed in the report, together with updates and challenged where necessary.

459. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE - QUARTER TWO 2025 / 26

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities providing an update on Health and Safety statistics and activity during Quarter Two (Q2) 1 July to 31 September 2025.

The report provided details of accident, near miss, hazard and unacceptable behaviour reporting and actions as a result of these. Additional health and safety improvements were continuing, and the improvements made within Q2 were detailed. Updates in respect of system resources, training, fire risk assessment, policies and procedures and health and safety inspections were set out in the report. The priorities for the next quarter were set out in the report and noted by Members.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations set out in the report. This was duly seconded.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities introduced the report and drew Members' attention to the unacceptable behaviour noted in paragraph 3.1.2 of the report, with further detail set out in Appendix 1. She gave reassurance that the Council continued to follow its Unacceptable Behaviour Policy, supporting staff, mitigating staff safety and reporting to / involving the Police where necessary. It was noted that changes to internal systems had resulted in improved staff reporting. The Chairperson commented that it was not acceptable to abuse staff and she was pleased to see this had been raised and the steps being taken to protect staff and ensure their safety.

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager then took the Committee through the report advising on the numbers of accidents / incidents and near misses and incidents of unacceptable behaviour during this quarter.

In response to a number of questions raised during the debate, the following information was provided by Officers:

- A comment was made in respect of the hazard reported regarding a blind spot at a pedestrian crossing point in Promenade Park and in response the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities advised that she would provide Members with detail of the location and mitigations made.
- Members were reminded that the Council had recently approved a programme of repairs to windows at the Council offices.
- For 2026 the Council had mobilised an event manager, deputy and events management team to lead on UFest and health and safety was incorporated into the event plan.

The Chairperson put the recommendations to the Committee. These were duly seconded and agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members considered the accident and incident statistics and incidences of unacceptable behaviour reported;
- (ii) That Members considered progress of key health and safety themes (as per section 3.2 of the report).

460. UK SHARED AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUNDS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive updating Members on the progress of the UK Shared and Rural England Prosperity Funds (UKSPF) for the allocation period 2025 / 26.

Members were reminded that the Chancellor had confirmed the continuation of UKSPF for a further year, allowing local authorities to invest in local growth, in advance of wider funding reforms. The Council on 3 April 2025 had approved the proposed projects to be delivered and granted delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee and Ward Members to identify projects for delivery.

The Council had submitted its forecast spend, outputs and outcomes for 2025 / 26 to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) who had confirmed acceptance of the submission. It was noted that of the £738,369 funding £349,300.97 actual spend had been incurred and Appendix 1 to the report provided a progress update on the individual projects.

Members were advised that Officers would continue to deliver the projects over the funding period, submitting the required MHCLG returns, as required. Further progress updates would be reported to the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee throughout the municipal year.

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

RESOLVED that the Committee acknowledged the update provided on Maldon District's UK Shared and Rural England Prosperity fund allocations for 25 / 26 and continues to monitor the delivery.

461. MEMBER TRAINING STATISTICS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive providing details on member training that had been completed.

The Head of Performance, Improvement and LGR introduced the report and reminded the Committee of its decision made on 13 November 2025 to receive an update at each meeting regarding Members who had completed training and where training was outstanding. The report highlighted the two main training platforms; Boxphish and e-learning; and the course completion statistics for both. The Head of Service advised that Members now had direct access to an interactive report which gave a monthly update and could be found on the Member reports app. The report suggested that the analysis be repeated in six months and included within the balanced scorecard reporting.

In response to comments raised, the Director of Strategy and Improvement highlighted how some detailed courses were required to ensure the Council was compliant and reduced its risk on matters such as General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Members were informed that Officers were going to highlight one key area of Member training, with reminders being sent to Members and once 100% completion achieved the next subject would be identified. The Chief Executive advised that Officers would also review the number and types of courses to highlight those which were compulsory for all Members.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations set out in the report and advised that along with the Chief Executive she would get a reminder regarding training courses sent out to Members. It was requested that Members were also reminded of the locations of the two training platforms along with a list of those that were compulsory.

The Chairperson put the recommendations. These were duly seconded and agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Committee noted the Member Training statistics and the required list of training courses that all Members should have completed;
- (ii) That the Committee will continue to receive six-monthly updates to this report, appended to the Balance Scorecard exceptions.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 9.10 pm.

W STAMP, CC
CHAIRPERSON