



MALDON
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Princes Road
Maldon
Essex CM9 5DL

www.maldon.gov.uk



06 May 2026

APOLOGIES: Committee Services
Email: Committee.clerk@maldon.gov.uk

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Doug Wilkinson

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to attend the meeting of the fifty fourth;

STATUTORY ANNUAL COUNCIL

on **THURSDAY 14 MAY 2026** at **7.30 pm**

in the **Council Chamber, Maldon District Council Offices, Princes Road, Maldon.**

Please Note: All meetings will continue to be live streamed on the [Council's YouTube channel](#) for those wishing to observe remotely. Public participants wishing to speak remotely at a meeting can continue to do so via Microsoft Teams.

To submit a question in writing or attend in person please complete a [Public Access form](#) (to be received no later than 12noon two clear working days before the Council meeting). All requests will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis.

A copy of the agenda is attached.

Yours faithfully

Chief Executive

Serving Members who are past Chairperson of Maldon District Council are invited to wear their past Chairperson's badges and medals.



**AGENDA
STATUTORY ANNUAL COUNCIL**

THURSDAY 14 MAY 2026

1. **Chairperson's notices**

2. **Election of Chairperson**

To elect the Chairperson of the Maldon District Council for the ensuing municipal year.

3. **Chairperson's Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office**

Chairperson to make the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

4. **Appointment of Vice-Chairperson**

To appoint the Vice-Chairperson of the Maldon District Council for the ensuing municipal year.

5. **Vice-Chairperson's Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office**

Vice-Chairperson to make the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

6. **Apologies for absence**

7. **Minutes - 26 March 2026** (Pages 7 - 14)

To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 26 March 2026, (copy enclosed).

8. **Declarations of Interest**

To disclose the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registrable interests and Non-Registrable Interests relating to items of business on the agenda having regard to paragraph 9 and Appendix B of the Code of Conduct for Members.

(Members are reminded that they are also required to disclose any such interests as soon as they become aware should the need arise throughout the meeting).

9. **Public Questions**

To receive questions from members of the public, of which prior notification in writing has been received (no later than noon on the Tuesday prior to the date of the meeting).

10. **Chairperson's Announcements**

11. **Meetings of the Council**

To note that since the last meeting of the Council, up until Wednesday 6 May 2026 (Council agenda dispatch) the following Committees have met, and to receive any questions in accordance with Council and Committee Procedure Rule 6 (2).

Appointments Board	12 March 2026
Strategy and Resources Committee	19 March
South Eastern Area Planning Committee	8 April
Central Area Planning Committee	15 April
Joint Standards Committee (special meeting)	28 April

12. **Questions in accordance with Procedure Rule 6 (2) of which notice has been given**

13. **Leaders and Composition of Political Groups** (To Follow)

- (i) To consider the report of the Chief Executive on the Leaders and composition of each political group (copy to follow).
- (ii) The Council to consider the ratification of the Leader-designate as Leader or to elect the Leader of the Council.
- (iii) To elect the Deputy Leader of the Council.

14. **Appointment of Membership of Committees of the Council** (To Follow)

To appoint Members to serve on Committees, as required by Procedure Rule 15. (Report of the Chief Executive on the nominations of the Leaders of all Groups to the places allocated to their respective Groups, copy to follow).

15. **Adjournment of meeting**

To adjourn the meeting to allow Committees of the Council and the Area Planning Committees to proceed to elect Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

Special Meeting of the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

To be followed by:-

Special Meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

To be followed by:-

Special Meeting of the Licensing Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

To be followed by:-

Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

To be followed by:-

Special Meeting of the Joint Standards Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

To be followed by:-

Special Meeting of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

**To be followed by:-*

Special Meeting of the District Planning Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

To be followed by:-

Special Meeting of the Central Area Planning Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

To be followed by:-

Special Meeting of the North Western Area Planning Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

To be followed by:-

Special Meeting of the South Eastern Area Planning Committee

- (a) To elect a Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year
- (b) To appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year

16. **Resumption of Business**

To continue with the business of the Statutory Annual Meeting of the Council.

17. **Appointment to Membership of Committees of the Council - continued**

To appoint Members to serve on the Appointments Board, as required by Procedure Rule 15. (Please see Agenda Item 14 for report of the Chief Executive on the nominations from the Leaders of all Groups to the places allocated to their respective Groups.)

18. **Appointment of Representatives to Local Government and Outside Bodies** (To Follow)
To consider the report of the Chief Executive (copy to follow).
 19. **Appointment of Members to serve on Working Groups of the Council** (To Follow)
To consider the report of the Chief Executive (copy to follow).
 20. **Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee** (Pages 15 - 20)
To consider the report of Director of Legal and Governance, (copy enclosed).
 21. **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Update** (Pages 21 - 24)
To consider the report of the Chief Executive, (copy enclosed).
 22. **Business by Reason of Special Circumstances Considered by the Chairperson to be Urgent**
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NOTICES

Recording of Meeting

Please note that the Council will be recording and publishing on the Council's website any part of this meeting held in open session.

Fire

We do not have any fire alarm testing scheduled for this meeting. In the event of a fire, a siren will sound. Please use either of the two marked fire escape routes. Once out of the building please proceed to the designated muster point located on the grass verge by the police station entrance. Please gather there and await further instruction. If you feel you may need assistance to evacuate the building, please make a member of Maldon District Council staff aware.

Health and Safety

Please be advised of the different levels of flooring within the Council Chamber.

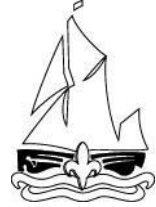
Closed-Circuit Televisions (CCTV)

Meetings held in the Council Chamber are being monitored and recorded by CCTV.

Lift

Please be aware, there is not currently lift access to the Council Chamber.

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**MINUTES of
COUNCIL
26 MARCH 2026**

PRESENT

Chairperson	Councillor K M H Lagan
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor R G Pratt
Councillors	M G Bassenger, V J Bell, J R Burrell-Cook, S Dodsley, J Driver, M F L Durham, CC, A Fittock, A S Fluker, L J Haywood, J C Hughes, K Jennings, A M Lay, W J Laybourn, S J N Morgan, C P Morley, M G Neall, R H Siddall, U G C Siddall-Norman, N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, W Stamp, CC, E L Stephens, J C Stilts, N J Swindle, M E Thompson and S White

1. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

The Chairman apologised for the slight delay to the start of the meeting due to a technical issue. He then welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through some general housekeeping arrangements.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D O Bown, S J Burwood and L L Wiffen.

Councillor S White left the meeting at this point and did not return.

3. MINUTES - 12 FEBRUARY 2026

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 12 February 2026 be received.

Declaration of Interest

Councillor J R Burrell-Cook advised that the penultimate sentence should read "...working with Gwyn Owen...". This amendment was noted.

2026 / 27 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (Council Tax 2026 / 27)

Councillor A S Fluker referred to the first paragraph of this Minute, advising how he had commented that the reserves of the Council belonged to council tax payers and fundamentally achieved by the sale of the Council's housing stock. He also advised that he had highlighted how only £8,000 of the £2.7m spend had been spent in the Southminster ward. In response the Chairperson advised that the Minutes would be amended to ensure that his first point was included.

Subject to the above amendments the Chairperson moved the approval of the Minutes, which was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (ii) that subject to the above amendments the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 12 February 2026 be confirmed.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor J R Burrell-Cook declared an other Registrable Interest in Agenda Item 11 – Culture and Heritage Update as he worked with Cultural Engine through the Tourism Group (Community Interest Company) and the Maldon Tourism Group.

Councillor M F L Durham declared an other non-registrable interest in Agenda Item 11 – Culture and Heritage Update as he was the Chairperson of Visit Essex.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council's public speaking protocol, it was noted that the following question had been received from Mr David Sismey who was in attendance and read out his question:

Question:

Please confirm how many reports of planning enforcement breaches have been made about the North Heybridge Garden Suburb since construction began and how many times the council has actually taken enforcement action. Almost 18 months on from when the western part of the relief road - the key infrastructure commitment of this development - was required by planning condition to be fully completed, why is it still not fully complete and what action has the council taken to have the developer deliver this commitment and remove the temporary works and detritus from this site?

The Leader of the Council read out the following response which had been published prior to the meeting:

Response:

"Since the first receipt in May 2021 of a service request to investigate a possible breach of planning control relating to the North Heybridge Garden Suburb, the Planning Enforcement Team has received eight allegations of breaches of planning control and opened subsequent investigations into each allegation.

The eight cases were received from a total of three sources, with a fourth interested party in one instance.

The eight cases comprised of:

- six cases of alleged breaches of planning conditions.
- one case of alleged illegal advertisement.
- one case of alleged removal of a hedgerow.

Five of the eight cases are now closed, with one case of unsubstantiated / unclear allegation, three cases of compliance through either a ceasing of the breach or retrospective consent being granted and one case of no material breach of planning control occurring.

Of the three remaining open Enforcement cases:
one is pending closure due to the approval of a Variation of Condition Application to resolve the matter.
one remains under investigation and the Council is seeking compliance and remedial action from the developer to mitigate any harm.
the third open case was only received on 23 March 2026 and is pending allocation to an Officer for investigation and assessment.

Maldon District Council is responsible for the overseeing and seeking assurance that the developer is complying with their planning obligations, as conditioned. The imposing of those said conditions is often, as in this instance, done via consultation with third party authorities during the planning consultation phase. Where the developer is required to engage with and is delayed by any such interactions with third party authorisers, the Council is expected to take a proportionate and pragmatic approach, due to such matters being beyond the developer to control or mitigate.

Formal Enforcement action should, as per Council policy and Government Guidance, be used proportionally where compliance cannot or is unlikely to be achieved through informal negotiation. Any formal action taken would need to be in the public interest and be specific on what steps the developer needs to take in a specified time to comply. If actions are beyond the developer's ability to take due to third party authorisation being legally required first, formal enforcement action would be inappropriate and highly unlikely to withstand challenge at Appeal, resulting in likely costs against the Council."

6. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairperson advised that he had recently attended the 60th anniversary celebrations of the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) in Burnham-on-Crouch and highlighted the importance of the visit and the kindness shown by staff providing a tour of the lifeboat station. He extended the Council's thanks to the generosity and work of the RNLI, commenting that it should never be underestimated.

The Chairperson referred to how he had recently completed ten 5k runs in March raising money for Cancer Research, an amazing organisation. He reported that this had currently raised £630 for the charity and thanked everyone for their support.

7. 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 18 March 2026 for which Minutes had been published.

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

There were none.

9. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairperson advised that in line with the Constitution Part 4(4)A he would be varying the agenda and moved to Agenda Item 15 – Outline Business Case for Maldon Museum Extension Project.

10. OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE FOR MALDON MUSEUM EXTENSION PROJECT

The Chairperson referred to the Monitoring Officer for an update.

The Monitoring Officer advised that in light of the decision released the previous day (Wednesday 25 March 2026) by the Government in relation to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Officers were requesting that this item of business be deferred to the meeting of the Council on 2 July 2026. This would allow time for Officers to consider the implications of LGR and to ensure that any recommendations reflected the revised strategic and governance context. The deferral would also enable additional community engagement to be undertaken.

Members noted that should the deferral be agreed, this would require a revised project timetable and meant that the scheme was unlikely to be fully delivered by vesting day in 2028.

The Chairperson proposed that this report be deferred to the Council meeting on 2 July 2026, acting on the guidance of the Monitoring Officer. This proposal was duly seconded.

In response to questions raised, the Monitoring Officer highlighted that there was an LGR update later on the agenda, however reported that additional information from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had been received at 4pm today (Thursday 26 March 2026) which Officers had not had the time to fully digest. A timeframe along with the Section 24 notice were awaited. The proposed deferral would allow discussions with the proposed new neighbouring authorities and whilst there was no statutory requirement to do this she felt it would be good business sense along with looking at the full implications of LGR. The pause would also ensure that Members had all information required to make a decision on the Museum project.

The Chairperson then moved the proposal to defer this item of business. This was duly agreed. He thanked all Officers involved, particularly the Capital Projects Director.

RESOLVED that this item of business be deferred to the Council meeting scheduled to take place on 2 July 2026.

11. TERMS OF REFERENCE - STRATEGIC HOUSING WORKING GROUP

The Council considered the report of the Strategic Housing Working Group (SHWG) seeking Members' consideration of the SHWG Terms of Reference (ToR) attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

It was noted that the SHWG had been established to oversee and provide strategic guidance on housing delivery in the Maldon District and its purpose was set out in the report. The proposed ToR defined the SHWG's role, scope composition, meeting procedures, ensured clarity, governance and accountability. Members were reminded that the SHWG did not consider individual housing applications, appeals or complaints but received reports on trends to inform strategic decision making.

The Leader of the Council (Chairperson of the SHWG) introduced the report referring to the Head of Housing Operations who presented the report and highlighted the number of households in temporary accommodation, open homelessness cases and applicants on the housing register with a level of housing need. A full strategy rewrite had been commissioned, and proposals were being developed to acquire additional temporary accommodation locally. Work with Registered Providers continued, and the Private Rented Sector Access Scheme had supported 11 households. Homes England had approved the joint Maldon District Council / Chelmsford Housing Partnership bid for Westcombe Park, an affordable housing delivery scheme, in Heybridge. It was noted that progress was ongoing toward gold-standard domestic abuse accreditation, and the Housing Team had recently been named Team of the Year.

During the debate that followed and in response to questions raised, the Head of Housing Operations advised that:

- she would ask the Housing Development and Allocations Manager to provide a response regarding any affordable housing delivery schemes planned for Burnham-on-Crouch or Southminster.
- following due diligence, the proposed housing scheme with Chelmsford City Council and Chess Development had been deemed not viable and not a good investment for the Council. This was why the Council was now looking to acquire its own units locally. In response to further questions around the reasons for not continuing with the housing scheme, the Monitoring Officer advised that Officers would confirm the details regarding this outside of the meeting.

In response to a question regarding the Council's budget and addressing the housing needs of the District, the Leader of the Council provided an update on work being undertaken and it was noted that a report regarding this would be brought to a future meeting of the Council.

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

RESOLVED that the Strategic Housing Working Group Terms of Reference (at Appendix 1 to the report) be agreed.

12. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Council received a verbal update from the Director of Legal and Governance on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.

Members were advised that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had confirmed its decision to implement the Five Unitary Model (FUA), which aligned with Maldon District Council's supported business case. A follow-up letter had been received from the MHCLG at 4pm, and officers were currently assessing its implications, with full details to be reported to Members in the coming days. It was noted that the proposals would proceed following Parliamentary approval of the required structural change order, expected in June or July, with a Section 24 Notice to follow in the autumn. Maldon District Council would continue to operate until 1 April 2028, after which it would become part of the new Mid Essex Council alongside Chelmsford City and Brentwood District Councils. Elections for the shadow councils were scheduled for May 2027, with elected councillors serving a five-year term. Joint Committees would be established beforehand to oversee transition work. MHCLG also announced at least £900,000 in funding for each new unitary authority. A meeting of

Leaders and Chief Executives was due to take place the following day, with a further Chief Executives meeting planned for April. Members would continue to be updated as more information became available.

The Director agreed with a comment regarding the speed that everything was moving and reassured Members that they would be kept up to date.

In response to a comment regarding financial constraints the Leader of the Council advised that there were none at this time, but it was essential that the Council worked with the new authorities. The Director of Finance reiterated this advising that now the Council had better clarity with regards to what was happening.

Councillor W Stamp referred to a radio interview she had heard, and a comment by the interviewee that issues regarding highways and potholes would be reduced following introduction of the new unitary authorities due to the local decision that would be made. She commented on the current difficulty to get such matters resolved.

RESOLVED that the update on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation be noted.

13. CULTURE AND HERITAGE UPDATE

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive updating Members on progress of the Culture and Heritage activities being undertaken, seeking an extension to the Culture and Heritage Strategy (the Strategy) development until June 2026 along with related delegation to develop and submit the Strategy. Approval was also sought to use budget allocated to fund a special event performance in 2027 and develop an expression of interest in relation to the Town of Culture 2028 competition.

The following declarations of interest in relation to this item of business were raised:

- Councillor J R Burrell-Cook declared he was Chairperson of the Maldon Festival who also received a grant along with a Where Quality of Life Matters grant funding for the Maldon Festival. He also declared he was a Member of the Visit Essex Advisory Board
- Councillor J Driver declared he was mayor of Maldon
- Councillor M F L Durham declared that the Maldon Festival as part of the cultural festival received a grant from Essex County Council and he was involved with the grant approval.
- Councillor A Fittock declared he had made a financial donation to the Maldon Festival
- Councillor N R Spenceley declared he was a trustee of the Maldon Festival
- Councillor P L Spenceley declared she was a trustee of the Maldon Festival

The Head of Economic Development introduced the report and gave a short presentation which outlined some of the recent and upcoming engagement, the proposal deferral of the special event performance to 2027 and highlighted key points in relation to the Town of Culture 2028 competition and the benefits of this. It was noted that Cultural Engine had been appointed as the Council's consultants. The presentation slides were circulated to Members during the meeting and would be available online afterwards.

Members were reminded of the recent decision by the Strategy and Resources Committee to allocate monies to allow detailed event planning and secure the headline act for a special event performance in 2026. Due to the availability of the headline act, it was proposed that the performance be moved to June 2027 and the Council was requested to agree to commit the funding to this date.

The report set out the themes which the Strategy would focus on, and it was noted to enhance stakeholder and resident engagement Officers were proposing that the engagement and development timeline be extended. This would allow for improved quality, depth and reliability of data collection and ensure that outcomes were evidenced and aligned with local priorities.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) had recently launched the first UK Town of Culture competition to spotlight contributions that towns make to the national cultural landscape. The report provided further details of the competition. It was proposed that the Council supported a UK Town Culture bid for Maldon Town, with Officers developing the work alongside appointed Culture and Heritage Strategy consultants. Appendix 1 to the report highlighted the key dates and significant benefits for the District.

Members expressed excitement at the opportunity the Strategy and Town of Culture competition would offer to the District. Councillor Durham advised that Essex County Council had recently hosted a trade and tourism delegation from America and provided further details regarding this.

In response to a question regarding stakeholders, the Head of Economic Development advised that if the recommendations were approved Officers would be consulting with key stakeholders.

The Head of Economic Development gave her assurance that if the Council reached the application stage the District as a whole would be covered and referred to the work done by the consultants, particularly the evidence base they had put together. Giles Tofield from Cultural Engine provided Members with an update on the work they had undertaken, including the areas they had focused on, recent presentation to the blackwater partnership and response from the public consultation. He highlighted the importance of including stories and how the Battle of Maldon was an original story which brought together a number of points of interest.

The Chairperson then moved the recommendations which were duly seconded and agreed. The Chairperson asked that his dissent in respect of recommendation (iv) be recorded).

The Head of Economic Development advised that there was an error and recommendation (iv) should read as follows:

“that subject to approval of recommendation (iii), development and submission of the ~~Town of Culture 2028 and Heritage Strategy Competition Expression of Interest~~ be delegated to the Senior Leadership Team in consultation with the Leader of the Council by the deadline of 31 March 2026”

The Chairperson put this amendment to the Council, and this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the extension to the Culture and Heritage Strategy development to June 2026 be approved;

- (ii) That the budget allocated for the Special Event Performance Funding to be utilised for a performance in 2027 be approved;
- (iii) That officers develop the Council's Town of Culture 2028 competition expression for interest;
- (iv) That subject to approval of recommendation (iii), development and submission of the Town of Culture 2028 Competition Expression of Interest be delegated to the Senior Leadership Team in consultation with the Leader of the Council by the deadline of 31 March 2026.

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

Councillor A S Fluker referred to a letter the Council had sent to major developers regarding consultants being appointed to review the Local Development Plan and asking them to bring forward new sites in the District for development. He asked the Leader if he could explain why this information hadn't been shared with Members and why developers had been asked to place shape the District ahead of Members. In response the Leader commented the Council was using a consultant to help it shape the LDP work and review what work could be used in the new process. He explained that the Council could call for sites at any time which is what it had done.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 8.40 pm.

K M H LAGAN
CHAIRPERSON



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**

**to
ANNUAL COUNCIL
14 MAY 2026**

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Council an annual update on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2025 / 26 is accepted.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was set up afresh initially under the Council's new Constitution with effect from October 2019. One of its responsibilities is to report to the Council on an annual basis, and the arrangements for this have been endorsed by the Council. Although the Committee also acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee, its scrutiny remit in that role is quite specific and relates to outside bodies and agencies involved with crime and disorder. The Committee's annual report to the Council is therefore confined to its scrutiny role other than in relation to crime and disorder.
- 3.2 The Operating Protocol for the Committee offers a process for the consideration of potential scrutiny items to ensure efficiency and clear outcomes linked to strategic themes. The Protocol also reflects Government Guidance which needs to be heeded. This refines the role of the Committee as being positive and forward looking, providing more of a 'critical friend' challenge, and generally assisting the Council and its Committees by identifying improvements and making recommendations. The intention is that Committee time will predominantly be spent on the planning and carrying out of actual scrutiny work. It has established a Working Group which can be used to manage items of a 'watching brief' nature or where information has been requested, and to assist with the planning of scrutiny.
- 3.3 In this municipal year, a number of direct referrals were received from the Member request form. All members have access to make a referral through the following link <https://forms.office.com/r/zR5yjZZFf3>.
- 3.4 The Committee also agreed a process for the initial consideration and review of potential items of scrutiny requested by Members. The Working Group has been tasked with this and has regard to the remit of the Committee and also the agreed operating protocol in identifying actual scrutiny items. It then reports to the next available meeting of the Committee.

3.5 The annual report for 2025 / 26 has been endorsed by the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Committee and is now set out at **APPENDIX 1** to this report.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The Council has established a sound basis for the operation of its Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the annual reporting arrangements are intended to ensure a degree of accountability of the Committee to Council.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

5.1 Delivering good quality services.

5.1.1 Thorough scrutiny processes support improved performance and efficiency which in turn will contribute to the quality of services provided, and functions undertaken by the Council.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – None directly, but individual scrutiny reviews will enable the impact on customers to be assessed.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Equalities are considered as part of the reporting on review work undertaken by Officers.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – Scrutiny reviews enable potential Corporate Risks to the organisation and their mitigation to be identified.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of financial impact to the organisation.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of any resource impact to the organisation.
- (vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** – None.

Background Papers: None.

Enquiries to: Stuart Jennings, Senior Specialist – Corporate Governance.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2025 / 26

- 1.0 Councillor S Morgan was elected Chairman of the Committee for the 2025 / 26 municipal year, with Councillor P L Spenceley elected as Vice-Chairman. All members of the Committee were appointed to serve on the Committee's Working Group. Councillor P L Spenceley was appointed as the Council's District Representative on the County Council's Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee. Councillors A Fittock and E L Stephens were appointed to represent the Committee on the internal Project and Improvement Management Framework.
- 2.0 Over the past year the Committee has dealt with the following scrutiny requests:

Subject	Status / Learning outcomes and actions	Update
Non-provision of improved facilities/adventure playground at Sensory Garden, Promenade Park, Maldon.	<p>This originated from a scrutiny request from Councillor P L Spenceley.</p> <p>The request sought to establish why this project had not progressed or been delivered following earlier public consultation.</p>	<p>The Committee at its September 2024 meeting agreed that sufficient information and assurance had been received and that no further scrutiny was required.</p> <p>Remains a 'watching brief' item for review by the Working Group should it be required.</p>
Cemeteries Maintenance	<p>This originated from a scrutiny request by Councillor W Stamp.</p> <p>Concern had been raised over the standards of maintenance at cemeteries in the Maldon District having regard to the operation of the new grounds maintenance contract.</p>	<p>At its September 2024 meeting the Committee agreed that this be treated as a 'watching brief' item with two reports to be made to the Working Group over a period of twelve months. Reports were made to the April and September 2025 meetings following which the Working Group was satisfied that no further review was necessary and that this watching brief could be closed.</p>
Planning Appeal re Land at A414 Maldon Road, Woodham Mortimer	<p>This originated from a scrutiny request by Councillor S J N Morgan.</p> <p>Issues raised were based on concerns expressed locally as to the Council's conduct in relation to the appeal and also its failure to secure compliance with a condition attached to the permission granted on appeal which may have affected the status of that permission.</p>	<p>This was included as a scrutiny workplan item by the Committee in February 2025.</p> <p>Following further detailed review and report by the Working Group, the Committee in September 2025 agreed to close this scrutiny item. Lessons learned were recorded, including the need to explain the appeal processes to the public. It was agreed as an outcome that the Council's Planning Appeals Protocol should be strengthened and that Officers look at this.</p> <p><i>(See update to the following item.)</i></p>

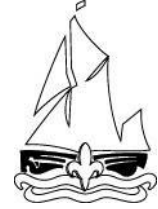
APPENDIX 1

Subject	Status / Learning outcomes and actions	Update
<p>Planning Appeal re Land at Church Road, Wickham Bishops</p>	<p>This originated from a scrutiny request by Councillor S J N Morgan, first reported to the Committee in June 2025.</p> <p>This also related to the conduct of the appeal but more particularly steps taken respond to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) by way of an emergency action decision.</p>	<p>This was the subject of a detailed initial assessment by the Working Group which reported back to the Committee in September 2025. The Committee decided that the matters dealt with during appeal process had been subject to legal advice and in the circumstances dealt with according to the Council's Constitution. The scrutiny request would therefore be concluded and not taken further. It was however agreed as an outcome that the Council's Planning Appeals Protocol be revised and strengthened.</p> <p>A revised and strengthened version of the Protocol was presented to the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee in September 2025 and adopted by the Council in December 2025 for inclusion in the Constitution.</p>
<p>Leisure Contract – Communications and Messaging</p>	<p>This originated from a scrutiny request by Councillor A Lay.</p> <p>The request focused on the implications of the proposed loss of the sports hall facility at the Blackwater Leisure Centre, Maldon, particularly for existing users. A clear understanding of the timeline and management process for delivery was sought with a view to minimising potential reputational damage in the future.</p>	<p>This was looked at in some depth by the Working Group as part of its initial assessment of the request. This included obtaining a clear understanding of Members' involvement from the outset and how they had been impacted during the implementation of the new contract.</p> <p>In the meantime, a separate scrutiny request relating to the leisure contract was received from Councillor E L Stephens (see below).</p> <p>At its December 2025 meeting the Committee decided that no further scrutiny as such was required but that the conclusions of the Working Group be taken forward as part of the proposed post-implementation review of the leisure contract.</p>
<p>Leisure Contract – Post Implementation Review</p>	<p>This originated from a scrutiny request by Councillor E L Stephens.</p> <p>It was contended that for a contract of this size and importance a post-</p>	<p>The Working Group through its initial assessment concluded that this request should be added to the scrutiny workplan so that consideration could be given to carrying out a post-implementation review of the contract. At its</p>

APPENDIX 1

Subject	Status / Learning outcomes and actions	Update
	<p>implementation review should be automatic. Through this, a clearer understanding of the procurement process would be gained together with an appreciation of the respective positions of both Members and Officers, and what the Council sought to achieve from the outset. The loss of the sports hall at the Blackwater Leisure Centre was not foreseen and proved to be contentious with the public, which had impacted on Members. A post-implementation review would be of benefit to similar major projects/contracts in the future.</p>	<p>December 2025 meeting the Committee agreed to add this request to the scrutiny workplan to enable further scrutiny to be undertaken in the form of a post-implementation/performance review of the contract involving all relevant stakeholders and to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining the scope • Selecting the procurement contractor • Decision on whether to go ahead or re-run the procurement • Communications
<p>Local Plan Policy H2 – Housing Mix</p>	<p>This originated from a scrutiny request by Councillor A Fittock.</p> <p>This sought to review use of Policy H2 in determining what is a satisfactory housing mix in decisions on planning applications. In addition, to what extent was monitoring taking place and being reported to Members. The outcome sought was to ensure that effective monitoring did take place to ensure that there was a sound evidence base to support decisions on acceptable housing mix proposals.</p>	<p>The Working Group gave detailed consideration to this request as part of its initial assessment, and this included a focused workshop session with all relevant Officers present. Arising from this, the Working Group concluded that in the light of the publication of an updated Local Housing Needs Assessment accompanied by Technical Advice Note, the request should be held in abeyance and reviewed in six months. The Committee at its December 2025 meeting agreed with this conclusion and to review implementation of the new approach in six months based on the monitoring year to the end of March 2026 and having regard to the housing mix within the permissions granted.</p>
<p>Planning Services Performance</p>	<p>This originated from a scrutiny request by Councillor V Bell and sought to review how the Department was dealing with and determining various planning applications. It was contended that concerns had been raised by experienced and qualified professionals on their dealings with the Department on applications and subsequent appeals. The outcome sought was to increase efficiency and reduce complaints.</p>	<p>This request did not comply with the Committee's Operating Protocol in that the matters referred to had not first been raised with either Officers or an appropriate Committee.</p> <p>At its December 2025 meeting, the Committee decided to take no further action on this request.</p>

- 3.0 In addition to the above matters dealt with by the Committee, its Working Group has continued to receive updates on Planning Enforcement staffing and performance, a longer-standing 'watching brief' item. It's report and recommendation was considered by the Committee at its September 2025 meeting where it was decided that the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee be asked to consider reviewing Planning Enforcement as part of its performance monitoring, which was subsequently agreed by that Committee. Planning Enforcement will remain a 'watching brief' item for future review as necessary by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.0 While scrutiny of particular decisions, actions and specific areas of work within the Council's remit will form the bulk of the activity, the Committee has quite a wide remit which includes the monitoring and review of the performance of external bodies and stakeholders. At its June 2025 meeting representatives of Anglian Water attended to give a presentation and deal with questions from members of the Committee. It had been intended that Officers representing Essex County Highways would be present at the same meeting to deal with a range of concerns raised by Members, but this was not convenient to them and did not occur.



**REPORT of
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**to
ANNUAL COUNCIL
14 MAY 2026**

DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That Members approve the response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) questions as set out from paragraphs 3.3 to 3.5 below;
- (ii) That in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chairperson of the LGR Working Group delegation is given to the Chief Executive to agree any amendments or to provide further information to MHCLG in relation to the information required to draft the Structural Change Order (SCO);
- (iii) That Members note the wider update around Devolution and LGR.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 It was announced on 25 March 2026 that the Government supported the Five Unitary business case, this was the business case supported by ten district council including Maldon District Council for Essex.

3.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has requested further information to inform the draft Structural Change Order (SCO) which must be supplied by 29 May 2026 namely:

- details of proposed warding arrangements
- Returning Officer for the elections to Mid Essex Authority
- details of Parish Council election harmonisation

- 3.3 **Warding Arrangements** - Officers have undertaken a review of the warding arrangements in line with the Boundary Commission guidelines. The proposed warding arrangement are as follows:

Existing District Wards	Electorate 06.2025	New Ward Total	Member / 3000	No. Cllrs (new)	Name of New Ward
Althorne	3559	6581	1.19	2	The Crouch Valley
Purleigh	3022		1.01		
Burnham on Crouch North	4231	7552	1.41	2	Burnham on Crouch
Burnham on Crouch South	3321		1.11		
Mayland	3400	8106	1.13	3	The Dengie Villages
Tillingham	1132		0.38		
Southminster	3574		1.19		
Tollesbury	2327	5750	0.78	2	Tollesbury and Tolleshunts
Tolleshunt Darcy	3423		1.14		
Heybridge East	3262	6773	1.09	2	Heybridge
Heybridge West	3511		1.17		
Maldon North	3406	5221	0.61	2	Maldon North East
Maldon East	1815		1.02		
Maldon South	3073	7257	1.14	2	Maldon South West
Maldon West	4184		1.39		
Great Totham	3159	6270	1.05	2	Maldon Rural North
Wickham Bishops & Woodham	3111		1.04		
		53510		17	

- 3.4 **Returning Officer** - The Returning Officer for the Mid Essex will be the Chief Executive of Chelmsford City Council.
- 3.5 **Parish Council Election Harmonisation** - This position has not been agreed by all authorities, but this is the current proposal for Parish Council harmonisation.

Proposal Parish/Town Council Elections

Ordinary year of elections	Ordinary End of term	Other elections we anticipate on election day that year	Proposal
2026	2040	Current council elections	Parish elections are already going ahead anyway, with a term of 4 years, but term should subsequently be extended to 6 years.
2027	2031	Shadow elections everywhere	Parish elections due to take place should go ahead, but term extended to 5 years.
2028	2032	Mayoral election	Parish elections due to take place should go ahead. No extension necessary
2029	2033	None – though General election is due by July 2029.	Parish elections should go ahead (if any) but with a three year term.
2030	2034	None	Parish elections should be postponed and term of those elected in 2026 extended to six years.
2031	2035	None	Parish elections should be postponed and term of those extended in 2027 extended to five years.
2032	2036	Unitary elections	All parish council elections take place this year

- 3.6 In addition to these discussions, officers have been working with others at Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council and Brentwood District Council around implementation delivery planning, and this work is progressing.
- 3.7 Each new unitary area will be supported by a Joint Committee to take early implementation decisions. Membership is expected to be split 50/50 between the county and the districts/boroughs in West, North East, and Mid Essex; and 50/50

between existing unitaries and county/district/boroughs in South West and South East. Alongside this, there will be a single officer Implementation Team led by the Essex County Council Chief Executive, supported by deputy leads from each new unitary area. Government also notes that preparatory work can continue during the pre-election sensitivity period.

3.8 Looking further ahead, all-out elections for the new councils are planned for May 2027, with members serving five-year terms through to 2032.

3.9 On Devolution, there has been no progress in this area.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Draft MHCLG responses are provided for Council approval, along with an update on the work around devolution and LGR.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

5.1 Supporting our communities

5.1.1 Good engagement with the Devolution and LGR process will ensure the best representation for our local residents.

5.2 Delivering good quality services

5.2.1 Good engagement with the Devolution and LGR process will deliver the best services possible in the new Mid Essex unitary.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – None.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – Engagement with this work reduces our Corporate Risk around Failing to be prepared for Devolution and LGR.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None.
- (vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** - The recommendations in this report are specifically around LGR implementation.

Background Papers: None.

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