



**MINUTES of
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
2 OCTOBER 2025**

PRESENT

Chairperson	Councillor J Driver
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor J C Stilts
Councillors	J R Burrell-Cook, S Dodsley, M F L Durham, CC, A Fittock, K M H Lagan, A M Lay, P L Spenceley, M E Thompson and E L Stephens (Substitute for R H Siddall)

277. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

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

278. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R H Siddall and in accordance with notice duly given Councillor E L Stephens was attending as a substitute for Councillor Siddall.

279. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 July 2025 be approved and confirmed.

280. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were none.

281. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

282. BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER 1

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) providing an updated financial position for the period ended 30 June 2025 (period 3 / quarter one (Q1)). It was noted that Q1 was early in the financial year and may be subject to changes in the coming months.

The report provided the Council's financial forecast for the full year ending 31 March 2025, including revenue and capital forecasts and the impact these would have on retained reserves. It highlighted that performance was closely aligned to budget which demonstrated good financial management in operational areas.

The CFO presented the report and advised of the following amendments to the recommendations set out in the report:

- Recommendation (v) should refer to Appendix 3;
- Recommendation (vi) should refer to Appendix 4;
- Recommendation (vii) should be deleted as this was a drafting error.

These amendments were duly noted.

The report provided detailed information including:

- **Revenue Budget Monitoring (Q1)** – The revenue forecast including main variances were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that overall the Council was within 0.3% of the budget and the CFO explained he was looking for a target of 1% above or below the budget.
- **Capital Budget Monitoring (Q1)** – The forecast for the capital budget projected an overspend of £38k against the revised 2025 / 26 Capital Programme and the main project details were set out in Appendix 2 to the report.
- **Reserves** – Movements on Reserves for the year 2025 / 26 were set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

The Chairperson then moved the recommendations, as amended and these were duly seconded.

In response to a question regarding the Revenues and Benefits reserve, the CFO explained that this amount was received as part of the council tax sharing agreement through Essex County Council and helped to support staff in the Revenues and Benefits teams across the county, ensuring that Councils had a good selection rate. He explained how Discretionary Housing Payments funding could be used to fund posts and that at present four Revenues and Benefits posts were funded through one off grant funding. The CFO would be reviewing this with the Revenues and Benefits team as part of ongoing budget monitoring and the 2026 / 27 budget process.

The Chairperson put the recommendations, and they were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members note the forecast revenue outturn, as at 30 June 2025, is £43,000 under budget (0.4%), further information can be found at Appendix 1 to the report along with reasons for significant variances;
- (ii) that Members note that additional grant funding has been received above the total estimated when the budget was approved in February 2025 (chiefly comprising £385,000 additional funding for the impact of small business rate reliefs and the impact of revaluation of business premises);
- (iii) that Members agree for the additional grant income received to be transferred to the Council Tax and Business Rates equalisation reserve until such time as the costs the grant is designed to fund are identified, when it will be moved to

the relevant service budgets (and reported to Members in the earliest subsequent report);

- (iv) That Members consider the forecast capital outturn as at 30 June 2025 which is for a total capital programme delivery of £6,502k against revised budget of £6,472k. Further information can be found at Appendix 2 to the report along with reasons for significant variances;
- (v) That the movements in Earmarked Reserves set out in Appendix 3 to the report be approved;
- (vi) that the revenue budget reconciliation in Appendix 4 to the report be noted.

283. DISCRETIONARY FEES AND CHARGES POLICY 2026 / 27

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) setting out the overarching principles (set out in section 3.2 of the report) through which Discretionary Fees and Charges would be set for 2026 / 27. It was noted that the detailed Fees and Charges would be updated based on these policies and brought forward alongside the budget proposals for 2026 / 27.

The CFO presented his report, advising how it set principles through which the Council would endeavour to set the fees and charges to be applied, and aligned with the budget process. He reminded Members that a large proportion of fees and charges were set nationally. For nationally set fees and charges the Council was required to advertise them and apply the charges in line with national guidance.

The table at paragraph 3.2.1 of the report set out the locally set ('discretionary') fees and charges and the factors that needed to be considered in setting charges for the coming year. If agreed the CFO would proceed to work through the exact levels of fees and charges for recommendation to the Council for consideration at its February 2026 meeting.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out in the report and this was duly seconded.

In response to questions raised the CFO provided the following information:

- The CFO was speaking to colleagues across the county regarding the standardisation of fees and charges once the Government had agreed a unitary structure. The Council did not yet know who it would be working with, and the CFO highlighted how it wasn't just council tax rates which would be different but also tariffs e.g. car parking where Councils had local variants. The important thing at this time was to ensure a transparent process through the current year.
- In response to a comment regarding the extensive list of fees and charges the CFO highlighted the need to ensure there was a balanced financial position, and the review of fees and charges was part of that. He agreed that it may be appropriate at times to clean through the overall schedule and delete those fees and charges that were no longer appropriate.
- Use of the word 'profit' in reference D related to the view for the public sector to be more commercial in its approach. The commentary for this item highlighted how as a public sector organisation the Council's principles were non-profit making. However, in response to a suggestion to amend the wording for this item it was agreed that reference D (as set out at section 3.2 of the report) be reworded as follows:

“In principle, fees and charges are generally to be calculated to recover the full cost of the service provided, not to make a surplus or profit. On regular review this may result in some charges going down or some charges being removed altogether. Some cross subsidy may occur between charges levied in the same service area, but the overall objective is to support the cost of discretionary services not to secure a commercial profit”.

The Chairperson put the recommendation, subject to the amendment to reference D (as detailed above). This was duly seconded and agreed.

RESOLVED that the overarching principles for discretionary Fees and Charges policies (as detailed below) be approved:

Ref	Principle	Commentary
A	Annual review	All discretionary fees and charges should be reviewed annually in terms of the tariff applied, recent activity trends, and the overall income achieved.
B	Promote access to services	The Council exists to provide important services to local people. Fees and charges should be applied in a way that promotes access to discretionary services. They should not be a barrier to services.
C	Full cost recovery	Fees and charges for council services should be set on the basis of full cost recovery. That is, charges should be calculated such that all costs are recovered as part of the overall charge – direct delivery costs, indirect service management costs and overhead support costs (such as ICT, HR (Human Resources), accommodation etc.).
D	Non-profit making	In principle, fees and charges are generally to be calculated to recover the full cost of the service provided, not to make a surplus or profit. On regular review this may result in some charges going down or some charges being removed altogether. Some cross subsidy may occur between charges levied in the same service area, but the overall objective is to support the cost of discretionary services not to secure a commercial profit.
E	Income = tariff x take-up	The tariff or charge applied is one part of a wider value chain. The other part is the activity volume. Together, tariff and volume generate the overall income to the Council.
F	Standard +2% uplift	<p>The MTFs (Medium-Term Financial Strategy) assumes a standard uplift of 2% per year on income from fees and charges.</p> <p>This may mean that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all charges increase by 2% per year; or • that some charges increase by more (or less) than 2%, with an expected overall increase of 2%; or • that activity is expected to increase by 2% in order to secure and overall income increase of 2% with no change to the tariff applied. <p>However, where actual inflationary pressures are higher than 2%, it is expected that income is similarly increased to maintain the full cost recovery approach.</p>
G	Inclusive	Options for concessionary reductions in fees and charges can be considered in line with wider council policies. How concessions are evidenced and applied should be simple, efficient and appropriate.

Ref	Principle	Commentary
H	Benchmarked	The level of charges set be compared to similar charges levied by local commercial competitors or other local authorities.
I	Flexible over time	Annual review of fees and charges should also consider the introduction of new charges or the rescinding of old charges.
J	Consistent with other policies	Consistency between fees and charges and other wider policies and strategies of the council, including the corporate plan objectives.

284. APPROVAL OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, WASTE AND CLIMATE ACTION ENFORCEMENT POLICY 2025

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive seeking Members' approval of the Environmental Health, Waste and Climate Action Enforcement Policy 2025 (the Policy), attached as Appendix A to the report. This Policy set out the principles and approach to enforcement within the Environmental Health, Waste and Climate Action team.

The Assistant Director - Place and Community presented the report highlighting the changes to the Policy and the key legislation it supported. It was noted that approval of it was crucial to providing fair, consistent, high quality enforcement interventions, which protect public safety and the environment as well as providing public reassurance.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out in the report and this was duly seconded.

In response to a query regarding Officer titles referred to in the Policy, Members were advised that once the new structure came into post any changes to Officer titles would be reflected in the Policy. A question regarding agency staff was raised and the Assistant Director advised that these staff acted under the same powers as contracted staff as they were delivering the same statutory functions on behalf of the Council.

The title of the Policy was queried as it was felt that use of the term 'Climate Action' could leave the Policy vulnerable to being changed or dropped in the current febrile and uncertain world of politics. It was suggested that the title would be amended to the Environmental Health, Waste and *Environment* Enforcement Policy 2025, noting that the word Environment would cover biodiversity as well. The Chairperson put the title change to the Committee. The proposal was duly seconded and upon a vote being taken this was agreed.

The Chairperson confirmed that references throughout the report would also be updated to reflect to new title.

RESOLVED that subject to amendment to update the title and references within the report, the Environmental Health, Waste and *Environment* Enforcement Policy 2025 be approved and published.

285. FOOD SAFETY PLAN 2025 - 2028

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive seeking Members' approval of the Food Safety Plan 2025 – 2028 (the Plan), attached at Appendix A to the report. The Plan set out how the Environmental Health Commercial Team would ensure that food placed on the market for human consumption (which is produced,

stored, distributed, handled or purchased within the Maldon District), is without risk to public health or the safety of the consumer.

The Assistant Director - Place and Community presented the report advising of the Council's statutory duty under the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013. The report detailed the three key aims of the Plan, how it linked to the Council's key objectives, the scope of the service and the financial and staffing allocation required to delivery the service along with the training, quality assessment and internal monitoring.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out in the report and this was duly seconded.

Members referred to the excellent piece of work and in response to a question regarding staffing allocation, the Assistant Director advised that a growth bid for two Environmental Health Officers had been approved for the current financial year, one of which sat within the commercial team. She outlined the challenges recruiting into that post which resulted in an extension to the Councils contract with an external company to deliver food hygiene inspections. The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) advised that based on performance and performance monitoring at this time the team were on track. She explained how the Council was scrutinised internally as well as by the Food Standards Agency.

Councillor M F L Durham clarified that food producers were the responsibility of Trading Standards. He then declared an interest as the Cabinet Member for Trading Standards at Essex County Council.

The Chairperson then put the recommendation, which was duly approved.

RESOLVED that the Food Safety Plan 2025 – 2028 (as set out in Appendix A to the report) be approved for publication.

286. REVISED 'OUR HOME, OUR FUTURE' CLIMATE STRATEGY AND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Net Zero and Air Quality Working Group seeking Members' approval of the revised 'Our Home, Our Future' Climate Strategy and Action Plan 2025 – 2028 (CSAP), attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The CSAP set out a deliverable evidence-based approach to achieving net zero emissions across Council operations by 2050 and supported wider District-level climate action.

The revised CSAP reaffirmed the Council's commitment to meaningful climate action through a more realistic, evidence-based approach. Providing a stronger foundation for accountability, collaboration, and a more sustainable path to achieving net zero emissions, both operationally and across the wider District.

Members were advised that the CSAP would serve as a framework for climate leadership and ensured climate and nature considerations were embedded across Council decision-making and investment. Evaluating the Council's current position, it would identify local opportunities to mitigate and adapt climate change as well as presenting a clear roadmap for reducing emissions, enhancing resilience and protection natural resources across the District. The report provided a summary of the CSAP, how it was structured around five Climate Impact Areas and the implementation and monitoring planned.

Councillor J C Stilts, as Chairperson of the Net Zero Working Group reminded Members that that the Council had previously received a report advising that its policy to meet net zero by 2030 was not attainable and following this the Council had agreed to extend the deadline. The CSAP would set the Council's policy in line with this change and the recently agreed Corporate Plan.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out in the report and this was duly seconded.

In response to a comment regarding the forward of the CSAP being incomplete and minor formatting changes, Councillor Stilts advised that this would be taken back to the next meeting of the Net Zero Working Group to make amendments.

Councillor K M H Lagan referred to the excellent piece of work and requested that the Committee's thanks be passed to the Officers involved in the revised CSAP.

The Chairperson put the recommendation, adding that this was subject to a final review by the Net Zero Working Group. This was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the revised 'Our Home, Our Future' Climate Strategy and Action Plan 2025 – 2028, including the projects set out in the Climate Action Plan be approved for publication, subject to a final review by the Net Zero Working Group.

287. LEASE EXTENSION - SPRINGFIELD BUSINESS PARK

The Committee considered the report of the Lead Legal Specialist requesting an extension to a lease for a business unit at Unit 8, Springfield Business Park, Burnham-on-Crouch. The report also sought delegated authority to allow extensions for any other units on the Business Park.

The report provided background information relating to the leases for units on Springfield Road Business Park, the majority of which were leased between 1973 and 1974 for a term of 85 years.

The Lead Legal Specialist presented the report and advised that the Council had received a request from a leaseholder to extend their lease by 66 years, effectively making it a 99-year lease. It was noted that if the request was approved officers were recommending that a new rental figure was carried out to allow the new agreement to begin at a current market value.

Members were advised that the report also sought delegation to allow further such applications to be dealt with in a similar way and how this would improve customer service to the remaining tenants who may also wish to extend their leases.

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

In response to a question, the Lead Legal Specialist advised that because the leases were not contracted out of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 tenant had an automatic right to renew their agreements when they expired in 2058. In relation to the changes that would come in with Local Government Reorganisation any such leases would novate over to the new authority automatically.

The Chairperson then put the recommendations which were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council agrees for the current lease for Unit 8, Springfield Business Park, Burnham-on-Crouch to be extended for an additional 66 years making the total lease length of 99 years;
- (ii) That the Assistant Director of Customer Services and Operations be given delegated authority in consultation with the Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee to agree extensions to any other lease of any unit within the Springfield Business Park with less than 40 years remaining to increase the lease term to a maximum of 99 years;
- (iii) That the Assistant Director - Customer Services and Operations be given authority to agree the annual rent figure for the leases in recommendations (i) and (ii) in line with a current market valuation with a ten-year rent review;
- (iv) that all leases which are extended in line with the delegation set out at (ii) above are reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

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

There was none.

289. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

290. LEGAL ACTION

The Committee considered the report of the Lead Legal Specialist advising Members of current legal action taken against the Council.

The Lead Legal Specialist presented the report and outlined details of the claim made against the Council for compensation under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Town and Country planning (Tree preservation) (England) Regulations 2012. The Officer provided an update on draft directions received from the land tribunal since publication of the report and what the implications of these were.

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

During the debate that followed the Lead Legal Officer and Chief Executive provided further information and advice to Members.

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

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council continues to defend the Claim against the Council;

- (ii) That the Assistant Director - Planning and Implementation in consultation with a legal advisor be authorised to respond to all legal representations, any directions of the Court and any other ancillary legal matters relating to this claim;
- (iii) That the Assistant Director - Planning and Implementation in consultation with the Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee and a legal advisor, regularly review the legal case and be granted delegated authority to settle the claim should it be expedient to do so.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 8.41 pm.

J DRIVER
CHAIRPERSON