



**MINUTES of
COUNCIL
13 FEBRUARY 2025**

PRESENT

Vice-Chairperson Councillor R G Pratt
(in the chair)

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

529. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

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

530. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M G Bassenger, K M H Lagan, A M Lay, C P Morley, N G F Shaughnessy and S White.

531. MINUTES - 12 DECEMBER 2024

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 12 December 2024 be approved and confirmed.

532. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were none.

533. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

At this point the Leader of the Council advised that in response to a public question received by the Council at its meeting on 14 November 2024 he had provided a statement about the number of properties occupied at Westcombe Park, according to the Council's Council Tax records. Following correspondence with the master developer the Leader informed Members that he was able to provide an update and as at 2 December 2024 the total number of occupations stood at 117 dwellings. Since that date further correspondence on 3 February 2025 showed that on 31 January 2025 there had been a total of 141 residential occupations.

The Leader of the Council advised that Councillor N G F Shaughnessy was currently undergoing treatment in hospital and on behalf of all Members wished her well and looked forward to seeing her back in the chamber.

534. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor R Pratt informed the Council that, in his role as Vice-Chairperson, he had attended a moving and poignant Holocaust Memorial Day at Rayleigh, hosted by Rochford District Council.

Alongside the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson had attended the day of dedication at the Maldon Woodland Glade at Maldon Cemetery. This event had been delayed due to the storm in December 2024. Memorial trees had been placed by volunteers and all families present were able to add wooden plaques with personal messages onto the trees.

It was noted that the Chairperson had attended the Heavy Vehicle meet at the Promenade Park and thanks were given to all staff involved.

Members were advised that Procedure Rule 4(8)3 standing to address the Chairperson would be suspended for this meeting.

535. PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 16 JANUARY 2025

The Council considered the following recommendation coming forward from the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee for consideration:

Amended Contract Procedure Rules in line with legislation under the Procurement Act 2023

RESOLVED

- (i) That subject to the above amendment, the Contract Procedure Rules 2025 (attached at Appendix 1 to the Council agenda) be approved to ensure the Council is compliant with the Procurement Act 2023;
- (ii) that the Council's Constitution at pages 218 to 242 is updated with the Contract Procedure Rules 2025.

536. STATEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR M F L DURHAM

At this point in the meeting Councillor Durham made a short statement. Referring to the last six months, his recent illness and the unexpected death of his eldest son the previous month. Councillor Durham expressed his sincere and heartfelt gratitude for all the messages of condolence, cards and flowers that his family had received during this very difficult time. He thanked Councillor Driver for covering for him at meetings and along with support received from the local government family at Maldon and Essex.

537. STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 23 JANUARY 2025

The Council considered the following recommendations coming forward from the Strategy and Resources Committee for consideration. These recommendations were

presented to the Council by Councillor J Driver, Vice-Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Fees and Charges Additional Information: Car Park Charges – Burnham-on-Crouch

In response to a query by Councillor A S Fluker regarding consultation with the Doctors surgery, and why Members of the Car Parking Task & Finish and Finance Working Groups had not supported the proposal at the last meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Driver advised that he would provide a written response.

Councillor Driver then moved the recommendation and upon a vote being taken this was duly agreed. Councillors Driver and M F L Durham asked that their abstention from the vote be recorded.

RESOLVED that the Car Park charges proposed for all Burnham-on-Crouch car parks not be agreed, and the Council continues to offer free car parking at all Burnham-on-Crouch car parks.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2024 / 25

RESOLVED

- (i) That the following changes to the existing schemes are approved:
 - a. a cost of living increase in line with the Department for Work and Pensions schemes be included in the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for 2025 / 26 for Pensioners only;
 - b. that any legislative changes being introduced to the Housing Benefit Scheme, for 2025 / 26 are mirrored in the Council's LCTS Scheme to ensure consistency;
 - c. minor technical amendments to ensure that the Council is able to administer the Scheme reflecting current local and national guidance and that the Council may disregard anything determined to be a local welfare payment from our calculation;
- (ii) that these decisions have been made following Members careful reading of and regard to the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 1 to the report considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- (iii) that Members note the unchanged framework for the Hardship Provision at Appendix 2 to the report considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- (iv) that the Policy document at Appendix 3 to the report considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee be approved;
- (v) that the Policy document at Appendix 4 to the report considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee be approved.

Business Rate and Council Tax Discretionary Policies

RESOLVED

- (i) That the proposed Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief Scheme at Appendix 1 to the report considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee be approved.
- (ii) That the proposed Empty Homes and Second Homes Premium Policy at Appendix 2 to the report considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee be approved.

Hythe Quay Dredging Project

RESOLVED that a budget provision of up to £135,000 is created for desilting the Hythe Quay and Visitors Pontoon.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025 / 26 Allocation

RESOLVED that Members consider the opportunity to 100% match fund the Council's allocation to maximise delivery opportunities for the benefit of communities and the District.

Revised Health and Safety Policy and Statement of Intent

Councillor Driver advised that following feedback from the Strategy and Resources Committee, the Council was asked to defer consideration of these recommendations to allow Officers to review the tone of the Council's Corporate Health and Safety (H&S) Policy before it was brought forward to the Council for approval. In response to recommendation (i) Officers propose that the Council has a separate H&S policy for Members that better reflects their activities, linking to other relevant policies as required. As Council Members are generally not classed as 'paid employees' and so in some respects, fall outside of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, senior officers feel this would be a better approach. Members would have the ability to inform this Policy through a focused Task and Finish Working Group, with the Corporate Health and Safety Manager in attendance to provide support and guidance. Councillor Driver advised that in light of this the Council is therefore asked to consider amending the recommendations of the Strategy and Resources Committee as follows:

- (i) That ~~the a separate~~ Health and Safety Policy be **further revised to include Members, linking to other relevant policies where appropriate;**
- (ii) That subject to (i) above, the revised Health and Safety Policy (Appendix 1 to the report) and Statement of Intent **for Officers** be adopted;
- (iii) That the roles and responsibilities of Committee Members and key staff **in each policy** be noted;
- (iv) That the annual review period **in each policy** be noted;
- (v) That two Members of the Council be appointed to ~~the Officer a~~ Working Group **to produce a Member Health and Safety Policy.**

The proposed changes were duly seconded.

The Leader of the Council advised that he wished to nominate Councillor K M H Lagan and J C Stilts be appointed to the Working Group. This was duly seconded.

The Chairperson put the amended recommendation and nominated Working Group members to the Council and this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That a separate Health and Safety Policy be further revised to include Members, linking to other relevant policies where appropriate;
- (ii) That subject to (i) above, the revised Health and Safety Policy (Appendix 1 to the report) and Statement of Intent for Officers be adopted;
- (iii) That the roles and responsibilities of Committee Members and key staff in each policy be noted;
- (iv) That the annual review period in each policy be noted;
- (v) That Councillors K M H Lagan and J C Stilts be appointed to a Working Group to produce a Member Health and Safety Policy.

Members were reminded that the following recommendations coming forward from this Committee were not for consideration at this point as they formed part of the following Agenda Items:

Agenda Item 10

- Income and Savings Proposals 2025 / 26 to 2028 / 29

Agenda Item 12 – 2025 / 26 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

- Capital and Investment Strategy for 2025 / 26, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2025 / 26 and Treasury Management Strategy 2025 / 26;
- 2024 / 25 Revised and 2025 / 26 Original Budget Estimates;
- Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025 / 26 – 2027 / 28.

538. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council noted the list of Committees that had met before and since the last meeting of the Council, up until Wednesday 5 February 2025 for which Minutes had been published.

539. 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 Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

540. INCOME AND SAVINGS PROPOSALS 2025 / 26 TO 2027 / 28

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Chief Finance Officer presenting Members with income and savings proposals to reduce the projected budget gap through the period of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025 / 26 to 2028 / 29.

The report provided an update in respect of the MTFS, funding expected and the projected budget gap for future years. It was noted that a further drawdown of reserves would be required to balance the revenue budget in 2025 / 26. The Finance Working Group would be undertaking further work to address the remaining gap in future years, and this would be reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee during 2025 / 26.

Appendix 1 to the report set out a number of options to close the budget gap and each item had been given a Red, Amber, Green rating in terms of deliverability and impact.

It was noted that the Strategy and Resources Committee had considered this report at its meeting on 23 January 2025 and recommended that the savings identified be supported.

In response to questions, Members were provided with further information regarding some of the saving options identified.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed that the Council agree the recommendation and thanked the Interim Chief Finance Officer, commenting that the position was much better than that reported 12 months ago. This proposal was duly seconded and upon a vote being taken was agreed.

RESOLVED that the final list of income and savings options as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

541. RESUMPTION OF BUSINESS IN OPEN SESSION

RESOLVED that the meeting of the Council resumed in open session at 8:03pm.

542. 2025 / 26 BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Council considered the reports of the Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer), on the recommendations of the Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2025 relating to the revenue budget and the proposed level of Council for 2025 / 26.

The Leader of the Council made a budget speech (attached at **APPENDIX 1** to these Minutes), during which he thanked the Interim Chief Finance Officer and his team for their hard work. He advised Members that the proposed budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provided a financial framework and strategic plan for the Council to deliver the priorities in its corporate plan. The Leader believed that the Council had the financial resources, workforce, leadership and determination to achieve the goals and looked forward to Members supporting the budget and MTFS presented.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1(13)a, each of the Opposition Leaders responded to the budget speech.

Councillor J C Stilts, Leader of the District Support Group (DSG), thanked Officers for the work that went into presenting the budget and noted that it was a cross-party budget which supported the corporate plan and strategic priorities of the Council. She highlighted the importance of ensuring Maldon was a good place for the future and continuing to support businesses, tourism and residents. She advised that the DSG supported the recommendation, specifically not to introduce car parking fees in Burnham-on-Crouch, the proposed desilting of the Hythe Quay and reintroduction of green food waste sacks. Councillor Stilts informed the Council that the DSG was

committed to working in partnership with other Groups and ensuring collaboration with the Police and other organisations to keep services local for residents.

Councillor J Driver, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group (LDG), thanked the Leader for his speech and he noted the number of significant achievements made by the Council along with the changes made since the last election in 2023. He referred to the collaborative working of the LDG with the other political groups and thanked the Interim Chief Finance Officer along with the Finance Working Group for all the work which resulted in a finance plan that reflected strategic priorities and community needs. Councillor Driver referred to the continuing aim to deliver and improve services for residents and commented on the reintroduction of green bags for food recycling in response to residents' concerns and the investment in community facilities such as play areas and skate parks. The Council needed to ensure it built a stronger voice in support of health, education, transport and affordable housing needs of the District. He commented how the Government's new planning policy placed greater pressure on the Council's planning department and the ongoing need to ensure the department was resourced and organised to meet these challenges. The Local Government Reform and Devolution presented significant challenges for the Council and Councillor Driver commented on the need for the Council to be strategically positioned to navigate them effectively. Overall, the LDG supported the budget which demonstrated strong financial planning and strategic investment, but Councillor Driver advised it was essential to remain vigilant in addressing the challenges ahead to secure a stable and sustainable future for the Maldon District.

Councillor S J Morgan, Leader of the Conservative Group, thanked the Leader for his speech and commented that the Council had been put together by all parties. He thanked the Finance Working Group (FWG) for the way it had carried out its tasks in relation to the budget and praised Officers, along with the Chief Executive who had assisted the FWG through their discussions arrive at the budget – the Council could be proud of what it had achieved. Councillor Morgan commended the budget to the chamber, commenting on the importance of the residents and the Council doing its best for its residents.

The Chairperson drew Members' attention to Agenda Item 12d Council Tax 2025 / 26 and revised Appendix A which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Chairperson proposed that the Council take the recommendations set out in reports 12a and 12c en-bloc. Upon a vote being taken these were agreed by assent.

Capital and Investment Strategy for 2025 / 26, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2025 / 26 and Treasury Management Strategy 2025 / 26

RESOLVED that the Council approves:

- (i) the Capital and Investment Strategy 2025 / 26 (Appendix 1 to the report), which includes the Capital Programme for 2025 / 26 – 2028 / 29 (Appendix 1a) and new Capital Projects Bids (Appendix 1b);
- (ii) the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2025 / 26 (Appendix 2 to the report);
- (iii) the Treasury Management Strategy 2025 / 26 (Appendix 3 to the report), with the Treasury Management Practices (Appendix 3a).

2024 / 25 Revised and 2025 / 26 Original Budget Estimates

The Chairperson moved the recommendations set out in the report.

In response to a question raised regarding the Leisure Contract and the assurance statement of the Interim Chief Financial Officer Members were advised that the risk identified relating to the volatility of the contract was because it was demand led, something which the Council could not control, and in response the Council had put mitigations in place which was the normal course of business. The Section 151 Officer had highlighted this within his report to ensure that Members and the public were fully aware of it and that measures had been put in place. A further question regarding sharing the details of the contract with Members, the Officer advised that he would advise Members outside of the meeting.

The Chairperson then put the recommendations and in accordance with earlier notification the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

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

Against the recommendation: None.

Abstain: None.

The Chairperson declared that these recommendations were therefore agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the following be approved:
 - (a) the Revised 2024 / 25 and Original 2025 / 26 General Fund Revenue Budget Estimates (Appendices 1, 2 and 3 to the report),
 - (b) an average Band D council tax of £232.01 (excluding parish precepts) (£6.74 increase) for 2025 / 26 (Appendix 1 to the report),
 - (c) policies on the designated use of financial reserves (Appendix 4 to the report).
- (ii) that the Council maintains the current policy of a minimum general fund balance of £2,600,000.
- (iii) that the Council gives due regard to the Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) statement on the robustness of budgets and adequacy of reserves in Appendix 5 to the report.

Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025 / 26 - 2027 / 28

RESOLVED that the revised Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2025/26 to 2028/29 (Appendix 1 to the report), as recommended by the Strategy and Resources Committee (and any subsequent necessary adjustments), be approved.

Council Tax 2025 / 26

The Chairperson moved the recommendations set out in the report and this was duly seconded. In accordance with earlier notification the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

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

Against the recommendation: None.

Abstain: None.

RESOLVED

- (i) that Maldon District Council's Council Tax Requirement for 2025 / 26 is set at £6,230,489;
- (ii) that the Maldon District Council's Band D Council Tax (excluding Parish precepts) is set at £232.01, reflecting an increase of £6.74 (2.99%), all other bands being determined in accordance with the relevant Sections of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended;
- (iii) that the precept demands and level of Band D Council Tax of the Essex County Council, the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority for both Police and Fire, and the various Parish Councils within the District be determined as set out in the report, all other bands being determined in accordance with the relevant Sections of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended;
- (iv) that the Council agrees the resolution set out at Appendix A to the report.

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

There were none.

544. COUNCIL OFFICES PRINCES ROAD

The Council considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive seeking Members' confirmation of the Council office's location in the immediate term so that key dependencies could be progressed.

The report provided background information regarding the viability of the Council building at Princes Road, the initial intention of the Council to relocate from Princes Road and the pausing of the project whilst focus was given to establishing the Council's Asset Management Strategy. Members were advised that since this time a number of other initiatives relating to building maintenance and repair, set out in the report, had reached a stage where critical decisions were needed in order to be able to move forward.

With Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation the future of the building and its role within local authority was unclear. Officers were therefore recommending that the

Council confirmed its intention to remain in the Council Office building in the immediate term. This would enable critical operations and strategic decisions to be made regarding the Council's Net Zero, Repair, Maintenance and Refurbishment ambitions and for them to be delivered whilst wider decisions were made.

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

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

- All the requests and references within the report were in principle. Confirmation of any spend would come back through the appropriate Committees or the Council for sign off and at that point the detail would be presented. This report was seeking approval to do further work around the work being requested.
- Three reports had been undertaken with regards to the Council building, one of these related to the efficiency of the building and what could be put in place with regards to Net Zero infrastructure. This was guidance and further work was required to provide more assurance.
- The monies detailed were an indicative indication of what could be spent. The Leader commented that of these monies it was expected that a large proportion would come from grants and the Net Zero Working Group had been looking at this.
- It was confirmed that a report on Net Zero, including some health and safety issues which had been considered by the Net Zero Working Group could be shared with Members.

The Chairperson put the recommendations which were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Maldon District Council will continue to operate from the Council Offices at Princes Road;
- (ii) That Maldon District Council will not be seeking to develop another site or relocate the Council to another office building for the immediate term;
- (iii) That the principle of 2025 spend from reserves with the purpose of ensuring urgent maintenance items are progressed is approved and details of any spend will follow normal approval processes as specified;
- (iv) That the principle of progressing with Net Zero feasibility and for officers to secure relevant funding to support this activity is approved;
- (v) That the principle of progressing further work with regard to making improvements to the offices to ensure they remain fit for purpose for Members, Officers and the Council's tenants be approved along with spending from reserves (via the appropriate governance route) should it be agreed that these should be implemented.

545. CONSULTATION RESPONSE - STANDARDS AND CONDUCT FRAMEWORK

The Council considered the report of the Monitoring Officer seeking Members agreement of a formal response on behalf of the Council to the Government consultation on member standards and conduct. A draft consultation response was attached at Appendix A to the report.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the consultation sought views on the introduction of a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England, and measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime in England to ensure consistency of approach amongst Councils investigating serious breaches of Member codes of conduct, including the introduction of the power of suspension. Following discussions with Group Leaders, a consultation response on behalf of the Council had been drafted. It was noted that any individual could also respond to the consultation using the link provided within the report.

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

In response to questions and queries from Members, the Monitoring Officer provided the following information:

- In respect of question 12 where a breach was found the investigation results would be published but would remain private if no breach was found. It was agreed that further clarity would be added to the response to question 12.
- It was not felt that a response was appropriate to questions 14 and 15 as these related more to an individual rather than a group.
- It was agreed that the response to question 17 would be updated to clarify that the Council did put measures in place to support staff and Members. Members were reminded that the Council's Employee Assistance Programme was available to Members as well as staff and was available 24/7, 365 days a year.
- In respect of question 25, Members were advised that there was no clear guidance, but the Officer would add further clarification.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations which were duly agreed. The Monitoring Officer advised that she would add a few points of clarification to the questions raised.

RESOLVED that subject to further clarification by the Monitoring Officer, the Council endorsed the draft consultation response to the Governments' consultation on member standards and conduct.

546. STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY 2025 - 2030

The Council considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive seeking Members' adoption of the reviewed Statement of Licensing Policy 2025 / 2030 (attached as Appendix A to the report), made as required under the Licensing Act 2005 (the Act).

The report set out the requirement on the Council (as a Licensing Authority) under the Act to publish a Statement of Licensing Policy (the Policy). The Policy outlined the Council's general approach to upholding the licensing objectives when making sections under the Act.

It was noted that the Licensing Committee had considered the revised Policy and since then a public consultation had taken place. Responses were received from three consultees and the details of these were set out in the report.

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

Councillor M F L Durham raised a query relating to Essex Outdoors, based at Bradwell, and licenses for its boats and boat operators. It was confirmed that Officers would pick this up outside of the meeting.

Councillor A S Fluker declared an interest in this item of business as he was a harbour commissioner.

RESOLVED that the Statement of Licensing Policy 2025 – 2030 be adopted.

547. STREET COLLECTIONS POLICY 2025-2030

The Council considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive seeking Members' approval of the Street Collection Policy 2025 / 2030 (the Policy), attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members were advised that the Policy provided guidance relating to charitable street collections on how the Council administered applications for permits, applied the law / regulations and ensured fairness to charities. The existing policy had been updated to take into account current best practice and updated guidance.

The report informed of the Council's responsibility for issuing permits for charitable street collections within the District as directed by the 'Police, Factories etc. (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1916 and the requirements under this Act.

Following consideration by the Licensing Committee, the revised Policy had been published for public consultation and it was noted that no responses had been received to the consultation.

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

RESOLVED that the Street Collection Policy 2025 / 2030 be adopted.

548. BUSINESS BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED BY THE CHAIRPERSON TO BE URGENT

There were none.

549. 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 items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

550. PROCUREMENT OF CLEANING SERVICES FOR PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Council considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive seeking Members' agreement to appoint a contractor to provide cleansing services for Council facilities including public conveniences, promenade depot offices, welfare facilities and cemetery toilets and chapels.

It was noted that the Council's current Public Convenience Cleaning Contract (the Contract) was due to expire at the end of April 2025. The Strategy and Resources Committee on 13 June 2024 had agreed to re-tender the contract to ensure best value for money, along with allowing the introduction of additional Key Performance indicators and the implementation of enhanced cleaning schedules in order to meet the changing needs of the public. A Working Group had been established to discuss the proposed contract and details of this along with the Tender process and the results of this were set out in the report.

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

During the debate that ensued, Officers provided further clarification and information in response to questions raised.

The Chairperson put the recommendations which were duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the Public Convenience Cleaning Contract be awarded to Bidder A as per the recommendations detailed within Appendix 1 to the report.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 9.32 pm.

R PRATT
CHAIRPERSON

Leaders Budget Speech

Good evening. Welcome Councillors, Officers, and members of the public.

I am here to present the annual budget for 2025/26 for Maldon District Council, alongside the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2025/26 – 2028/29. The annual budget and MTFS are the result of months of collaborative work between officers and Members.

Together, we have developed a financial strategy that supports the Council's strategic priorities, as outlined in the revised Corporate Plan.

The financial outlook for the Council is generally positive, largely due to the recently approved leisure contract, which will provide significant commercial income over the long term. This of course, will require good contract management and diligence throughout the contract term.

Additionally, over the past year, we have implemented numerous improvements across the Council, demonstrating our commitment to efficiency, savings, and technological advancements, which have further strengthened our financial position.

The local government landscape however is a completely different situation to last year. Local Government reorganisation and Devolution changes some of our priorities and our focus as members. We need to ensure that we leave the Maldon District in a good place and that we have plans in place to ensure that we are focused upon what we can do for the long-term benefit of the district.

I would also like to thank Mr Cookson for getting to grips with the finances so quickly and I know we all appreciate the excellent Finance team we have at Maldon. That alongside our new Chief Executive Mr Wilkinson and our Deputy Mr Dodson, who, working with their assistant directors and budget managers have ensured we produce a balanced budget. I know we really appreciate officers work and the members of the working groups for their diligence, commitment, and constructive challenges, ensuring the proposed budget is robust, sustainable, and reflects the needs of our community.

With the revised corporate plan, we now have the opportunity to set the service plans to the budget. This will enable us to deliver on a council that works for its residents, businesses and visitors.

I want to thank members of all political groups and the nonaligned, in the way we have worked constructively together to enable a council that is stable and focused. This has improved how we are seen locally, in Essex, regionally and nationally. We have presence on both regional and national working groups and organisations. We can be proud of what we have achieved.

Our commitment to delivering good quality services continues, with officers delivering for our residents. There is more we can do to improve how some of our services are delivered.

We have listened to our residents and as part of the budget, we are reintroducing green bags for food recycling. This will help residents, to work with us in delivering the highest recycling rates in Essex and to continue to be one of the best councils in the country for our waste services.

As part of our corporate plan, we have a focus to support our local businesses and towns. I would therefore ask members to support the recommendation, not to introduce car parking charges in Burnham.

Across the council by introducing new systems, software and processes we have improved our services and become more efficient. This has brought benefits to our residents and increased savings.

The introduction of the new leadership structure has fostered closer collaboration between Officers and Members. This will continue this year and work with both officers and members will take place to identify and establish, the best way for the organisation to be structured. This will enable further efficiency and also support the organisation through the LGR process.

We have initiated several projects to enhance community facilities and accessibility. These include upgrading play areas at Prom Park, improving the BMX track, and adding a new accessible play site at Riverside Park. A new pontoon has been installed in Burnham on Crouch, replacing the one destroyed by a storm. New skateparks are being developed in Maldon and Burnham on Crouch.

With limited resources and a team effort, the Council successfully delivered its £1 million UK Shared Prosperity Funding allocation, investing in projects across the district. We also awarded 19 Rural England Prosperity grants, totalling £396K, to businesses in our rural community.

The council continues to collaborate with Essex Police on community safety and, with PFCC funding, has increased speed enforcement at district hotspots. The Community Engagement Team is expanding services like community patrols and speed enforcement from April 2025.

Our partnership with the NHS has been fruitful, delivering health and well-being activities, prevention campaigns, and the One Maldon District Partnership work. Through this collaboration, we have provided £63K of Thriving Places funding to community groups across the district. We have supported five community-based projects to enhance their delivery and further support residents in areas of mental health, reducing social isolation and access to services.

We have also strengthened our relationship with the NHS and Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board. The challenge of the health services still exists in the district and the Chief Executive and I have been part of the working group to ensure that services remain in the district. We are also working with the community group. We do seem to be working towards a long-term solution, and the provision of health services in the district is in a much better position than this time last year.

It has been a successful year for delivering Public Health, Sports England, Active Essex, and Active Maldon funding. The Beat the Street programme saw over 5,000 residents participate, walking an impressive 38,650 miles. We have invested in various sporting activities, including swimming sessions for children with SEND needs, new football and tennis equipment, and after-school activity clubs.

Our Supporting Local Business programme has also been successful, with fully subscribed business events and support. The Let's Do Business Group has achieved remarkable results, delivering much more for our businesses at a fraction of the previous cost.

As part of our new corporate plan, we will be developing a culture and heritage strategy, this will enable the council to support tourism, culture, and heritage, which plays a vital role in our local economy.

Looking ahead, we will continue to improve processes to enhance the customer experience and organisational efficiency. We will be data-driven, updating corporate reporting and

performance indicators to measure the delivery of the new Corporate Plan and maintaining robust corporate governance processes, to deliver value for money. We can really focus on our budget and service delivery plans, so that they are tied together.

We will continue with the IT strategy roadmap, reducing systems and costs, developing more cost-effective contracts, and delivering new technology improvements; including the use of AI. We will develop our Organisational Development and Workforce Strategy to ensure we are well-resourced, and that staff are suitably trained.

We will invest in our assets, updating and installing leisure equipment, and improving open spaces and parks. We will deliver an updated Local Development Plan and work with partners to attract inward investment.

The Chancellor's autumn budget confirmed another one-year allocation of UKSPF funding. We look forward to investing the £327K in more projects across the district. Members will see this evening that there is an opportunity to maximise this funding by using reserves to match fund the investment in our district. The intention is to ensure that we allocate funding to community projects across the district.

I am under no illusion as to the scale of the challenges we face; however I remain optimistic that by continuing with our collaborative working, and I am sure all members welcome the opportunity to continue with this, and that together with officers we will meet those challenges.

With the demands that we face, working with our external partners is crucial to the lives of residents and the success of organisations with the district. I am sure we can deliver the best possible outcomes for the district.

Members, the proposed budget and MTFS before you this evening provide a financial framework and strategic plan for us to deliver the priorities in our Corporate Plan. I believe we have the financial resources, workforce, leadership, and determination to achieve these goals. I look forward to you supporting the budget, and the medium-term financial strategy presented this evening.