



**MINUTES of  
COUNCIL  
17 JUNE 2025**

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**PRESENT**

Chairperson                      Councillor K M H Lagan

Vice-Chairperson              Councillor R G Pratt

Councillors                      M G Bassenger, J R Burrell-Cook, S J Burwood, S Dodsley,  
J Driver, M F L Durham, CC, A Fittock, A S Fluker,  
L J Haywood, A M Lay, W J Laybourn, S J N Morgan,  
C P Morley, R H Siddall, U C G Siddall-Norman,  
N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, W Stamp, CC, E L Stephens,  
M E Thompson and L L Wiffen

**1.      CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES**

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

**2.      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors V J Bell, D O Bown, K Jennings, M G Neall, J C Stilts, N J Swindle and S White.

**3.      DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor L J Haywood declared that in respect of Agenda Item 9 - Mayland Neighbourhood Plan - Decision on Examiner's Report she was Chairperson of Mayland Parish Council but believed she was able to vote. This was confirmed.

**4.      PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were none.

**5.      CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson welcomed newly elected Councillor Sarah Dodson who was representing West Maldon, referring to her as a very community minded Member.

In accordance with Part 4 Rule 8(3) of the Constitution, the Chairperson advised that he would be suspending the need to stand.

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

There were none.

**7. MALDON DISTRICT FIVE YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY 2025 / 26**

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that he was **withdrawing** this report and referring it back to the Planning Policy Working Group. A replacement report would be brought forward to a future meeting of the Council.

**8. MALDON DISTRICT GROWTH OPTIONS**

The Council considered the report of the Assistant Director: Planning and Implementation seeking Members' approval of the Maldon District Local Development Plan (LDP) Review Options for Growth 2025 to enable further testing and modelling to be undertaken by the Council and its partners.

The report provided background information regarding the LDP Review, the seven options identified following consideration of the Issues and Options consultation feedback and related Member briefing. Members were reminded of the three options approved by the Council in September 2023 (as set out in the report) and Appendix A detailed the national policy changes that had occurred since that approval. The most fundamental change was an update to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which had resulted in a reduction of the District's Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) and the Council needing to consider a higher housing target for the LDP Review.

Appendix A provided further details in respect of the three options approved. It was noted that for a number of reasons (as detailed in the Appendix) to move the LDP Review forward, there was only one option Officers were bringing forward to test further, this was:

- Option 3 – Growth generally focused on the towns Maldon and Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch and all the large villages of the Settlement Pattern.

It was clarified that the 'large villages' would be Southminster, Great Totham south, Tollesbury, Latchingdon, Tillingham, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Wickham Bishops and Mayland.

The Chairperson drew Members' attention to an addendum that was circulated prior to the meeting detailing proposed amendments to the recommendation.

In her introduction of the report, the Head of Planning Policy and Implementation gave a short presentation which detailed the stage the Council had reached in the LDP Review timetable, how the chosen option would be used to model and test with statutory partners and there would be work carried out around a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment. All the work would go forward towards the formation of an up-to-date Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Members were reminded that they were not being asked to agree a preferred option for growth or agree any housing numbers.

Members were advised that options 3 and 5 were very similar except option 5 included large sites adjacent to the boundary of the District, or in other settlements (Althorne and South Woodham Ferrers (SWF)). The proposed change to the recommendation

would mean that in addition to option 3 the site adjacent to SWF would be included for testing and modelling.

The Chairperson moved the revised recommendation, as set out on the addendum. This was duly seconded.

During the lengthy debate that ensued Members raised a number of comments and concerns, to which the Officers responded and provided further information including:

- the importance of Members' oversight in terms of infrastructure was highlighted and it was noted that there were a number of elements of the LDP which were set by the Government and therefore the Council didn't have any control over.
- If the site adjacent to SWF were included in the Housing Target table within the report approximately 1,500 – 1,800 houses would emerge from this.
- Officers were due to meet with Essex County Council Highways (Highways) following this meeting as the highways modelling was likely to take the longest to complete. Highways had advised that they wished to start work in September 2025 and would normally avoid major roadworks. In response to a comment regarding the current diversion at Langford Road, Officers advised that they would raise this with Highways.
- In respect of the timetable, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) wanted the Council to submit its Plan before December 2026. It was hoped that the Council would have a Plan by 1 April 2028. In response to a question regarding the possibility that the Council may not exist after May 2027, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Local Government Reorganisation proposal was for a shadow authority for 2027 and not changing until 2028. The Leader commented that the MHCLG expected local Councils to still Plan make, and these Plans were important as they would be used to shape the District over the next 15 years.
- Reference to the villages of Mayland and Maylandsea was queried, and it was clarified that the Appendix should refer to Maylandsea as this was where the shops were located. It was requested that in addition to making this amendment, the Council review its current definition of Maylandsea as a 'larger village'. This request was noted.
- Officers would discuss with Anglian Water regarding waste recycling centres and when existing centres would be improved.
- In response to questions and comments regarding Option 5 (as set out in the report), Members were advised that this could be included. However, the main difference between Option 3 (being proposed by Officers) and Option 5 was that Option 5 included sites at Althorne and adjacent to SWF.
- The Planning Policy Working Group could look at how the Council could influence any modelling done.

The Leader of the Council reported that he had recently written to the Minister of Health to raise the Council's concerns regarding the health situation in the district and the need for district valuers to be using current information to ensure that developers were able to obtain a marketable rent.

At this point, Councillor Spenceley withdrew her earlier proposition and there was some discussion about including Option 5 and whether reference to SWF should be changed to Stow Maries.

Councillor Spenceley then proposed that the recommendation set out in the report be amended and the Maldon District local Development Plan Review Option for Growth (Appendix A) be approved to enable modelling and further testing on Option 3 and Option 5. This proposal was duly seconded.

In accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) Councillor M G Bassenger requested a recorded vote. This was duly seconded and the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

Councillors J R Burrell-Cook, S J Burwood, S Dodsley, J Driver, M F L Durham, A Fittock, A S Fluker, K M H Lagan, A M Lay, W J Laybourn, S J N Morgan, C P Morley, R G Pratt, R H Siddall, N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, E L Stephens, M E Thompson and L L Wiffen.

Against the recommendation:

Councillors M G Bassenger, L J Haywood, U G C Siddall-Norman and W Stamp.

Abstention: There were none.

The Chairperson advised that this was therefore agreed and became the substantive motion which now required voting on.

In accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) Councillor W Stamp requested a recorded vote. This was duly seconded. The Chairperson put the substantive motion to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

Councillors J R Burrell-Cook, S J Burwood, S Dodsley, J Driver, M F L Durham, A Fittock, A S Fluker, K M H Lagan, A M Lay, W J Laybourn, S J N Morgan, C P Morley, R G Pratt, R H Siddall, N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, E L Stephens, M E Thompson and L L Wiffen.

Against the recommendation:

Councillors M G Bassenger, L J Haywood, U G C Siddall-Norman and W Stamp.

Abstention: There were none.

The Chairperson advised that this was therefore agreed with the comments raised regarding Mayland and Maylandsea villages to be noted.

**RESOLVED** that the Maldon District Council Local Development Plan Review Option for Growth (as set out in Appendix A to the report) be approved to enable modelling and further testing on Option 3 and Option 5.

## **9. MAYLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - DECISION ON EXAMINER'S REPORT**

The Council considered the report of the Assistant Director – Planning and Implementation seeking approval of the recommended modifications made in the Examiner's report (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) for the Mayland Neighbourhood Plan (MNHP), Design Guidance and Codes. Members' approval for the MNHP to proceed to Referendum was also sought.

The report provided background information regarding neighbourhood planning, part of the Government's initiative to empower local communities to take forward planning proposals at local level. A Neighbourhood Plan had to follow a regulatory process, and this was set out in the report. An examiner had been appointed by the Council to carry

out the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan and the report provided by the examiner was attached at Appendix 1.

Following the Officers' presentation, the Chairperson moved the recommendations set out in the report. These were duly seconded and agreed.

In response to a question regarding the Government withdrawing its funding for Neighbourhood Plans, the Head of Service - Planning Policy and Implementation explained that this would not affect the MNHP but could impact those coming forward. However, the Council had not yet been officially advised that the funding had been withdrawn so at this time further detail was not known.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) that the Examiner's modifications be agreed and that subject to these modifications the Mayland Neighbourhood Plan is determined to meet the Basic Conditions and other legislative requirements;
- (ii) that the draft Decision Statement attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved to be published on the Council's website; and
- (iii) that the Mayland Neighbourhood Plan be agreed as modified (at Appendix 3 to the report) enabling it to proceed to a local Referendum based on the boundary of Mayland Neighbourhood Area as recommended by the Examiner.

## **10. ELECTION OF A DISTRICT COUNCILLOR - ALLOCATION OF COMMITTEE PLACES**

The Chairperson referred to the recent appointment of Councillor Sarah Dodsley and proposed that she be appointed to the Strategy & Resources Committee and Investigating & Disciplinary Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, in line with political balance. This proposal was duly seconded and agreed.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Sarah Dodsley be appointed to the Strategy & Resources Committee and Investigating & Disciplinary Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, in line with political balance.

## **11. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION UPDATE**

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Chairperson had requested a regular briefing on progress with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution. Therefore, this would be a standing item on future Council agendas.

The Deputy Chief Executive referred to the Member briefing on 28 May 2025 and how work was progressing quickly, particularly regarding the LGR process. Alongside the Leader of the Council, today he had attended the five unitary authority option programme board meeting at Southend where discussions had focused on the evidence base for place-based approaches to social care along with the member representation approach within the new proposed authorities.

The Deputy Chief Executive handed over to the Assistant Director – Strategy, Partnerships and Communications who provided a further verbal update on Devolution and LGR including:

### **Devolution:**

- Essex was part of the Priority Devolution Programme, led by Essex County Council (ECC), Thurrock and Southend. If approved by parliament the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) would be established with the first mayoral election scheduled for May 2026.
- Subject experts were being identified to begin work on how the MCCA would operate. Maldon District Council (MDC) Officers would contribute to policy workshops being arranged, with topics including transport & infrastructure, economic growth & housing, planning, and environment & climate change. The aim was to have as many policies, processes and resources in place for day one of the MCCA.
- The aim was to have the target operating model for the MCCA designed by the end of July 2025.

#### **LGR:**

- A letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to Essex, Southend and Thurrock Chief Executives had confirmed £514,000 to support the development of business cases. The letter encouraged the sharing of data / evidence bases and for there to be as few proposals submitted as possible.
- Two proposals were being developed:
  - Option A – Five Unitary Authorities  
This model had three phases to it. Phase one was complete and phase two continued until the end of July 2025, the data gathering and development phases.

It was expected that a draft of the business case would be available between the end of July and middle of August 2025. The business case would set out the clear ambition, main benefits and outcomes for this model. As well as how this model would work with the MCCA devolved powers and functions to demonstrate how the two can work both strategically and operationally, to deliver services and infrastructure across the five unitary areas.

An extraordinary meeting of the Council would be taking place on 25 September 2025 to review the business case prior to the submission deadline.

- Option B – the ECC led business case which was currently going through an options appraisal.

MDC Officers are engaged in Option A with Leaders and Chief Executive's engaged with both options via the Essex Leaders' and Chief Executives forum.

- A number of consultants had been commissioned and the Assistant Director took Members through these along with the roles that they would play.
- In line with feedback from the MHCLG there would be a strong emphasis on empowering communities and putting residents first, recognising the opportunity for Neighbourhood Area Committees and for there to be place-based engagement and leadership. It will focus on sustainability and balancing the scale with local responsiveness.

- Resident engagement would be via a consultation website running for a period of four weeks. This information would be shared with Members as soon as it is ready to go live, expected to be at the beginning of the following week.
- Officers continued to support the work to inform the business case and the first meeting of the Council's Devolution and LGR Member Working Group was scheduled to take place on Thursday 19 June and would run every six weeks (or as needed) until the unitary councils formed.

The Leader of the Council assured Members that in terms of modelling the Council would look at all options to ensure that the right case was put forward. There would be a pan Essex Consultation across the whole of Essex which would feed into the business case development. He provided further information regarding the initial analysis from the Social Care Institute for Excellence regarding the size of authorities.

At this point and in response to questions raised the Chairperson advised that he was moving to Agenda Item 12 - Questions to the Leader of the Council in accordance with Procedure Rule 1(3)(m).

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

Councillor M F L Durham referred to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the independent evidence regarding four or five unitary authorities not being viable, he asked the Leader of the Council why the Leader was not providing everyone with all the information so they could review and make their own judgement. Councillor Durham explained that he felt Members should be able to see and read the information for all options. In response the Leader advised that he hadn't been sent that information, but as soon as any information was available it would be shared.

Councillor A S Fluker sought confirmation as to why Agenda Item 7 (Maldon District Five Year Housing Land Supply 2025 / 26) had been withdrawn. In response the Leader explained that the report was withdrawn as it was felt at this time there wouldn't be consensus in the chamber, and it would go back to the Member Working Group for further consultation with them and Members as a whole.

In response to a question from Councillor Fluker regarding whether the Planning Policy Working Group had agreed recommendation (ii) in Agenda Item 8 – Maldon District Growth Options the Leader advised he would respond to this outside of the meeting.

Councillor W Stamp questioned why a written report on Devolution and LGR had not been brought forward rather than a verbal update. In response the Chairperson advised that he had requested a verbal update which is what Officers had delivered.

In response to a further question from Councillor Stamp regarding the five model for LGR the Leader detailed the Councils that were developing a draft business case for the five unitary model along with other organisations who were working on elements such as social care analysis. Once brought together the business case would be presented to Members. There had been recent discussions regarding the number of Members involved in a potential new unitary authority and at this time it was felt to be around 60 – 90 across the five unitary model with around 19 Members in Maldon. As soon as any further information was available it would be shared with Members and the Leader advised that the Member Working Group was due to meet the following week.

Councillor E L Stephens asked the Leader of the Council how he felt about the opening of the Splash Park being delayed again. She commented that the Overview and

Scrutiny Committee having reviewed the Splash Park and referred to the conclusions drawn. The Leader agreed he was extremely disappointed and asked for the Corporate Leadership Team and Officers to come back with a reason as to why this did not happened and to ensure promises made were met.

At this point the Chairperson advised that he was closing questions to the Leader of the Council as the Council's Constitution advised that such questions were for a period of 15 minutes only and this time had now expired.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 9.17 pm.

K M H LAGAN  
CHAIRPERSON