



**MINUTES of
COUNCIL
11 DECEMBER 2025**

PRESENT

Chairperson	Councillor K M H Lagan
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor R G Pratt
Councillors	M G Bassenger, V J Bell, D O Bown, 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, R H Siddall, U G C Siddall-Norman, N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, W Stamp, CC, E L Stephens, J C Stilts, M E Thompson and L L Wiffen

387. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

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

The Chairperson advised that he had agreed to allow Councillor M F L Durham to address the chamber. Councillor Durham referred to the July 2025 meeting of the Council and a comment he had made about the Leader not sharing all relevant Local Government Reorganisation data and a further comment that Councillor Durham was using his mobile phone during his discourse. He provided further detail regarding this and accepted that some Members may have felt that he was disrespectful and caused offence. Councillor Durham formally offered his apologies to those concerned.

388. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S J Burwood, M G Neall, N J Swindle and S White.

It was noted that Councillor M G Bassenger would be attending but had been delayed.

389. MINUTES - 25 SEPTEMBER 2025

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 25 September 2025 be approved and confirmed.

390. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor J R Burrell-Cook declared that in relation to Agenda Item 12 - North Essex Local Growth Priorities he had been working with Gwyn Owen from Essex County Council and others as part of the Maldon District Tourism Group.

391. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

392. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairperson sent Members' condolences to Councillor W J Laybourn following the recent loss of her son.

The Chairperson advised how he had recently attended the day of dedication at Maldon Cemetery and commented on the fantastic and well run event by Council Officers.

The Council's staff awards had taken place on Wednesday 10 December and acknowledged the hard work that peers gave to each other. The Chairperson commented that it was a superb event enjoyed by all those that attended.

The Chairperson advised Members that he was taking part in the David Randall charity fun run on Sunday (14 December) and welcomed any sponsorship for the charity event.

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

In response to questions regarding Members being advised of the mechanics of the staff awards process, whether a Member could nominate somebody and who had won awards this year, the Chief Executive advised that this information would be circulated outside of the meeting. The Chairperson reported that there had been 35 nominations for awards this year and they were all considered by a nominations panel along with the narrative for the nomination. The Chairperson assured Members that every single person who had won an award was thoroughly deserved and he made particular mention of the Housing team who had won a special team award.

393. PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 18 SEPTEMBER 2025

Councillor W Stamp, Chairperson of the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee presented the following recommendation coming forward from the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee for consideration by the Council.

Minute No. 256 – Council Constitution – Planning Appeals Protocol

RESOLVED that the Council endorses the revised and strengthened version of the Planning Appeals Protocol (attached as Appendix 1 to the agenda), and adopts it for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

394. STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 2 OCTOBER 2025

Councillor J Driver, Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee presented the following recommendation coming forward from the Strategy and Resources Committee for consideration by the Council.

Minute No 283 – Discretionary Fees and Charge Policy 2026 / 27

RESOLVED that the overarching principles for discretionary Fees and Charges policies (as detailed in Appendix A to the agenda) be approved:

395. STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 20 NOVEMBER 2025

Councillor J Driver, Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee presented the following recommendation coming forward from the Strategy and Resources Committee for consideration by the Council.

Fees and Charges Schedule 2026 / 27

Councillor Driver advised that following consideration by the Finance Working Group and Officer discussions with Councillor R Pratt the following amendments were proposed to the Fees and Charges Schedule for 2026 / 27:

- That all day Sunday charges for Maldon Town Centre Car Parks should apply after four hours and not three hours. The full daily rate for a Sunday would therefore apply if using a car park for more than four hours.
- That the following items be removed as they were not currently in use:
 - The daily charges for exclusive use of visitor pontoons in Maldon and Burnham-on-Crouch;
 - The weekly winter charge (October – April) for use of the pontoon at Maldon.

Councillor Driver proposed that subject to the above amendments the detailed Fees and Charges Schedule for 2026 / 27 be agreed.

In response to a question regarding White Horse Lane car park and whether signage could be improved to advise of cheaper, alternative car parks within the High Street, it was agreed that this could be referred to the Car Park Working Group.

The Chairperson then put the proposal which was duly seconded and agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that subject to the following amendments, the detailed Fees and Charges Schedule for 2026 / 27 as set out in Appendix A to the Council agenda, be agreed:

- That all day Sunday charges for Maldon Town Centre Car Parks should apply after four hours and not three hours. The full daily rate for a Sunday would therefore apply if using a car park for more than four hours.
- That the following items be removed as they were not currently in use:
 - The daily charges for exclusive use of visitor pontoons in Maldon and Burnham-on-Crouch;
 - The weekly winter charge (October – April) for use of the pontoon at Maldon.

Councillor M G Bassenger joined the meeting during this item of business.

396. 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 December 2025 for which Minutes had been published.

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

There were none.

398. SAFEGUARDING POLICY - CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

The Council considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities seeking Members' approval of the Safeguarding Policy: Children, Young People and Adults Policy attached at Appendix A to the report.

The Head of Community Safety and Customer Services introduced himself and presented the report to the Council. The report highlighted the Council's statutory responsibilities for safeguarding Children, Young People and vulnerable adults as a second tier Local Authority under the Care Act 2014(i) and the Children's Act 2004(ii). It was noted that Essex County Council was the statutory lead organisation for Safeguarding. Members were advised that the Council's Safeguarding Policy had been refreshed and rewritten and the report detailed the key updates.

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

There was some discussion in response to a question regarding a requirement for all Members to have a Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) check and it was agreed that this would be raised outside of the meeting. It was confirmed that Members having a DBS check was not a legal requirement.

A lengthy debate ensued and in response to questions raised the following information was provided:

- Officers agreed to provide Members with details of figures relating to the number of safeguarding cases dealt with by the Council.
- There was a process for hirers of Council facilities to follow regarding submitting their own Safeguarding Policy and it was noted that if a user did not have a policy, they could adopt the Council's.
- All Council Officers received safeguarding training as part of the induction process, however it was noted that the level of training depended on the individual role.
- It was confirmed that all Suez staff undertook safeguarding training and a recent audit by the Council had required evidence to support this which had been received.

The Chairperson then put the recommendations to the Council, and these were duly agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the updated Safeguarding Policy at Appendix A to the report be adopted;
- (ii) That the Safeguarding Lead provides an annual safeguarding report to the Senior Leadership Team to support oversight and continuous improvement.

399. COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Council considered the report of the Director of Finance seeking Members' agreement to set its tax base for the financial year 2026 / 27 in order to set its council tax requirement. Members were advised that the Council had to notify its tax base calculations to Essex County Council, Essex Fire Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex and Parish / Town Councils in order that they can set their council tax for 2026 / 27.

It was noted that annual setting of the Council's tax base was a pre-requisite for all local authorities under the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012. Appendices to the report set out the calculation of the tax base (Appendix A) and the tax base for each Parish / Town Council (Appendix B).

The report provided an update on the current collection rate and reduction in the number of local council tax support cases. It was noted that the Council Tax Base figure for 2026 / 27 represented an increase of 1.63% and this related to the rise in the number of chargeable properties, a decrease in the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, less a slight decrease in the expected collection rate.

The Director of Finance took Members through the report and provided some additional background information to the information detailed.

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

In response to a question regarding the latest Government announcement regarding mansion tax and the impact on the Council's budget, the Director of Finance advised that the Council was awaiting detail of the provisional Local Government statement for 2026 / 27 which would provide this detail. At this point confirmation was awaited regarding mansion tax.

RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012 the amount calculated by Maldon District Council as its council tax base for the 2026 / 27 year shall be set at **27,293.0**.

400. NORTH ESSEX LOCAL GROWTH PRIORITIES

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive seeking Members' approval of the North Essex Councils (NEC), North Essex Local Growth Priorities document attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The NEC partnership was established to drive forward collaborative working in a range of strategic areas including housing growth, economic development and climate action. The report set out the NEC Members.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report providing detailed background information regarding the development of the priorities document through collaborative

working across all North Essex partners. He highlighted that although the mayoral elections would not be taking place in 2026 the combined authority would still be formed and that local plans were a key part of the work that the Government still wanted to take place. Despite the deferral of mayoral elections, the Leader explained that the formation of the combined authority would progress as previously set out and that the report was therefore the opportunity for the Council to raise a number of its key concerns as part of the formation of that new authority.

The Head of Economic Development gave a short presentation which provided further background information, the NEC vision and outcomes and set out the Growth Priorities which had been identified. The future-facing ambition of the priorities and how they are designed to remain relevant through LGR were set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

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

A lengthy debate ensued and in response to comments made the following information was provided:

- It was understood that the new mayor would have the adult skills budget devolved to them which would give greater opportunity and flexibility to ensure the needs of Maldon district are delivered.
- Councillor J R Burrell-Cook informed the Council of work he had been doing with Gwyn Owen on the inclusion of tourism as an addendum to the Policy. He advised that details of this had been shared with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council.
- In response to comments about the Maldon District being neglected in the report, the Head of Economic Development advised that Officers as well as the Leader had robustly presented the needs of the District, however as a regional strategic document some concessions were required across all North Essex Councils.
- Concerns regarding tourism and hospitality were acknowledged by Officers, and it was noted that the work of the NEC related to the priorities across that particular area. Work regarding tourism, culture, heritage etc. formed part of work being undertaken with Greater Essex devolution.
- It was confirmed, in terms of concessions made by the Council in discussions at the NEC, this related to not having reference to St. Peters Hospital within the document. It was noted that Officers and the Leader had sought for inclusion and therefore investment in this site, but it was not currently included in detail but did reference the St. Peters site. However, it was commented that the projects listed had already received some backing from central government.
- The table on pages 86 – 87 of the report pack detailed the benefit to the District from each of the projects. The Head of Economic Development referred to a more detailed table which was shared at a recent Member briefing. She agreed to circulate this information to Members outside of the meeting.
- In respect of skills, the Council would be paying close attention to the Essex Chamber of Commerce who were charged with delivering the local skills improvement plans (a nationally sponsored and government led programme).

The Leader of the Council advised that the document was a starting point and was not intended to go into industry specific detailed information, how the combined authority would be formed would come out of later, additional work. It was necessary to bring the document through at this point to ensure that it was ready for presenting to the

combined authority in May 2026 so that it was aware of the NEC views. In response to a comment regarding housing affordability and focusing on the medium house price to ratio, the Leader advised that he would speak to Gwen Owen to review this data and ensure it was more reflective of the true position.

During the debate the following declarations of interest were made:

- Councillor K M H Lagan declared that his wife worked for Adult Community Learning in Maldon.
- Councillor M F L Durham declared he was Chairperson of Visit Essex and the Rural Community Council of Essex.
- Councillor J R Burrell-Cook declared he was on the advisory board for Visit Essex and on the Maldon and Heybridge Transport Group.

Further comments and concerns were raised by Members, it was questioned whether the document was premature due to the appointment of a mayor having been delayed.

The Chief Executive thanked Members for their comments and explained how the destination of the document had changed following postponement of the mayoral elections. It was not a statutory document or strategy but intended to give the mayoral candidates an idea of some of the things within the region which were important at a strategic infrastructure level. Specifically, it was intended to give a steer around important regional priorities, and how the new mayor would be the conduit to get central government funding. He referred to the A12 widening project which had been cancelled by central government and how it had been felt important to include this within the document due to its importance for how it could stimulate the economy particularly connectivity and growth. The Chief Executive provided further information regarding St. Peters Hospital and how it had not regionally compared with other schemes, such as a new hospital in Harlow but how a case for it being mentioned in the document had been argued due to the local significance.

In accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) Councillor M F L Durham requested a recorded vote. This was duly seconded.

The Chairperson then put the recommendation as set out in the report and the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

Councillors M G Bassenger, A Fittock, J C Hughes and R H Siddall.

Against the recommendation:

Councillors D O Bown, M F L Durham, A S Fluker, L J Haywood, K M H Lagan, S J N Morgan, C P Morley, R G Pratt, W Stamp, J C Stilts, M E Thompson and L L Wiffen.

Abstention:

Councillors V J Bell, J R Burrell-Cook, S Dodsley, J Driver, K Jennings, A M Lay, W J Laybourn, U G C Siddall-Norman, N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley and E L Stephens.

The Chairperson advised that this was therefore not agreed.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer clarified that where a recommendation failed this did not stop someone putting forward a further recommendation.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed that the report be noted. This was not seconded.

Councillor Durham proposed that the Council wait and see what comes back in version 2 of the document. This was not seconded.

Councillor Burrell-Cook proposed that the Council defer approval of the report until all the included elements come back in the report from Essex County Council and Officers. This was not seconded.

At the point, Councillor P L Spenceley commented that the paragraph within the document referring to St. Peter's Hospital was not strong enough and requested that this be noted.

Councillor Burrell Cook then clarified his earlier proposal, proposing that the matter be deferred until the points raised that required inclusion into the report go back to the NEC and officers to look at the inclusion of the items raised such as St. Peter's, tourism, specific transport and skills & training. This was duly seconded.

Further debate ensued and during this the Leader of the Council clarified that he fought for the Maldon district at every opportunity and across a number of different bodies that he was part of.

There was some discussion on whether the Council could request deferral or if a new report should be requested. To clarify the Deputy Monitoring Officer provided Members with further guidance advising that by deferring the Council was seeking feedback on the points raised as to whether they should be included or not. When this came back to the Council it could then consider the response, whereas if the document was rejected the six-month rule would come into consideration.

Councillor Durham raised a point of clarity as the document had been brought forward to present to a mayoral candidate and there would not be one within the next two years. The Council therefore didn't have to do this right now.

Councillor Fluker raised a point of clarity regarding the six-month rule and sought confirmation that if a decision was made it could return to the Council on the premise that there would be new information. The Chairperson confirmed this.

The Chairperson then moved the proposal in the name of Councillor Burrell-Cook. Upon a vote being taken this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the North Essex Local Growth Priorities (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) be deferred and send back to the North Essex Councils to consider inclusion of the items raised by this Council including, St. Peter's Hospital, tourism, specific transport and skills & training.

401. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive providing an update on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) activity in Greater Essex.

The report set out the four proposals for LGR from councils in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock. At its meeting on 25 September 2025 Maldon District Council had agreed to support the Five Unitary Authorities (5UA) proposal. The Government Consultation was currently live and would run until 11 January 2026. The report set out the work being undertaken by Officers including areas where business as usual resources were likely to be impacted as a result of LGR.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and provided detail including how the statutory instruments to establish the combined authority would be implemented by the Government in the new year. It was noted that the Greater Authority had appointed an interim Chief Executive Officer, and the Government was providing funding to appoint lead staff in the strategy areas. The Leader reported how at the Essex Leaders and Chief Executives meetings he had raised concern regarding the lack of balance in representation with only one district council representatives from the north being appointed to the authority.

The Head of Performance Improvement and LGR advised that since publication of the report, the Government had, on 3 December 2025, alerted the Council that it was mindful to delay the Mayoral Strategic Authority elections from May 2026 to May 2028 to complete the reorganisation process before the Mayor took office.

The Chairperson put the recommendation set out in the report. This was duly seconded by Councillor M F L Durham who advised it was his understanding that there would be a proposal coming forward for two district council representatives.

In response to concern raised that the LGR Working Group and particularly its Chairperson had not received an update regarding the recent changes, the Leader of the Council apologised and commented that this was very recent information and he had had a busy diary earlier in the week which had not allowed any time to share this but committed to update the Chairperson of the LGR Working Group at the earliest opportunity in the future. In response to a further question, the Leader explained to Members the timeline in respect of receiving information from the ministry regarding the proposed change to the appointment of a mayor.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation which was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the current update of Devolution and LGR, and possible resource implications as the activity to progress LGR develops be noted.

402. CONSULTATION RESPONSE - LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Council considered the report of the Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) seeking Members' agreement of a formal response on behalf of Maldon District Council (MDC) to the statutory government consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Essex.

The Head of Performance, Improvement and LGR presented the report which provided background information regarding LGR, the Council's decision to support the Five Unitary Authorities (FUA) model and the statutory consultation launched by the Government. The consultation sought views on the proposals received by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and was due to run until 11 January 2026. A draft consultation response on behalf of MDC had been produced (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) and considered by the LGR Working Group.

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

In accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) Councillor S J N Morgan requested a recorded vote. This was duly seconded, and the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

Councillors M G Bassenger, V J Bell, S Dodsley, J Driver, A Fittock, L J Haywood, J C Hughes, K Jennings, K M H Lagan, A M Lay, R H Siddall, U G C Siddall-Norman, N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, E L Stephens and J C Stilts.

Against the recommendation:

Councillors M F L Durham and A S Fluker.

Abstention:

Councillors D O Bown, J R Burrell-Cook, W J Laybourn, S J N Morgan, C P Morley, R G Pratt, W Stamp, M E Thompson and L L Wiffen.

The Chairperson advised that this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the draft consultation response at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

403. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2026 / 27

The Council considered the report of the Director of Legal and Governance presenting for Members' consideration the draft Schedule of Meetings for 2026 / 27 (attached as Appendix 1 to the report).

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

RESOLVED that the Schedule of Meetings for the 2026 / 27 municipal year be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

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

Councillor W Stamp referred to the work of the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB) helping to safeguard adults at risk and enable them to live lives free from abuse and neglect. She asked the Leader if he would work with the Chief Executive to look out for an email from Deborah Stuart Angus Chairperson of the ESAB. Councillor Stamp advised the Council that the work of the ESAB was threatened due to a shortfall of funding from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and outlined the contributions made by District and Borough Councils under Section 43 of the Care Act. Councillor Stamp asked if the Leader would consider bringing forward a motion to consider funding some additional money for the ESAB. She advised that this would be asked of all District and Borough Councils in Essex. In response, the Leader agreed that this should be considered, advising that he would look into this through the Finance Working Group and then to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Councillor A S Fluker referred to the Planning Appeals Protocol that the Council agreed at an earlier part in the meeting and how he had attended a few planning appeals recently where Members had given evidence. He asked the Leader of the Council if Members could be encouraged to attend such appeals to find out how the worked process worked etc. and suggested that further training was required. In response the Leader advised that it might be useful to get the Planning Advisory Service to provide some training to Members. The Leader suggested that in addition to the statutory training, it would be beneficial to ensure Members had the correct skills, knowledge and abilities.

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

The Chairperson announced that in accordance with Section 100b(4) of the Local Government Act he had agreed to allow the Director of Finance and Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities to raise an urgent item of business.

406. URGENT BUSINESS - SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE - MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL ROADWAYS / CAR PARK

The Council considered the urgent report of the Director of Finance / Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities seeking Members' approval of a supplementary estimate for works previously approved by the Council to conduct resurfacing work located in the Council's parks and a car park. It was noted that this item of urgent business had been brought forward to avoid delay in the planned works which was likely to lead to rescheduling of the work as well as potentially increasing the costs.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities presented the report which outlined the bids agreed as part of the 2025 / 26 Capital Programme for road resurfacing works at Promenade Park, Riverside Park and Butt Lane / White Horse Lane car parks. Since the excavation works had started it had become clear that unknown issues would need to be addressed to deliver the overall schemes as intended. The report set out the reasons for this additional cost.

During the debate that ensued Members expressed concern regarding the proposed additional costs and some reference was made to the original contract for the works. Members were advised that the works were originally planned 18 months ago, and a large amount of the increase related to a general increase in costs. It was confirmed that a ground / soil survey was undertaken, however it was not until the ground was opened up that further issues were identified in the sub-base of the construction of the road.

At this point Councillor W Stamp referred to an earlier point in the meeting where she had said something unsuitable regarding a situation and apologised to everybody for this.

The Chief Executive provided some further detail regarding highways construction works, explaining how this situation was not uncommon. However, the increase in cost would significantly extend the life of the asset, opposed to just a resurface which would only extend life for 3- 5 years. He referred to how the increased cost had been magnified by the time taken from the original estimates, some 2- 3 years ago, and how the works would provide a far superior product but there was a learning exercise relating to estimates and contracts and the time taken to get to delivery. The Chief Executive advised that a detailed breakdown of the related costs could be provided to Members.

The Chairperson then moved the recommendation set out in the report. This was duly seconded and agreed. Councillor K M H Lagan requested that his vote against the proposal be recorded.

RESOLVED that the Council gives approval for the investment of £142,000 in addition to the previous approvals totalling £288,000 for additional remedial works to the assets concerned in order to ensure that the subsequent resurfacing works are undertaken in a way that maximises the life of the new surface.

The Chairperson thanked Members for the support they had given him this year.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 9.33 pm.

K M H LAGAN
CHAIRPERSON