



**MINUTES of
COUNCIL
12 FEBRUARY 2026**

PRESENT

Chairperson	Councillor K M H Lagan
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor R G Pratt
Councillors	M G Bassenger, V J Bell, J R Burrell-Cook, S Dodsley, J Driver, M F L Durham, CC, A Fittock, A S Fluker, L J Haywood, J C Hughes, 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, N J Swindle and M E Thompson

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 D O Bown, S J Burwood, K Jennings, M G Neall, S White and L L Wiffen.

3. MINUTES - 11 DECEMBER 2025

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 11 December 2025 be approved and confirmed.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor J R Burrell-Cook declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7a – Minute Book: Strategy and Resources Committee - 29 January 2026 as he operated a public house. He noted that in respect of this item the implementation date shown on page 32 of the report pack was incorrect. In respect of Agenda Item 11 - North Essex Local Growth Priorities Councillor Burrell-Cook advised that he had been working with Gwyn Own on the growth priorities. This was noted.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

6. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

The Chairperson advised that he would be changing the order of business and moving Agenda Item 11 - North Essex Local Growth Priorities up the agenda.

Members were asked to refrain from using keyboards and electronic devices during the meeting unless necessary as they were distracting.

The Chairperson advised that on behalf of the Council he had recently attending the national Holocaust memorial day at Rochford District Council. He advised this was a humbling and moving day and the importance of not forgetting the atrocities of the past.

7. MINUTE BOOK

At this point in the meeting and following his earlier declaration, Councillor J R Burrell-Cook left the meeting.

8. STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 29 JANUARY 2026

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, Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Council Tax Support Scheme 2026 / 27

Councillor Driver advised that the Council agenda incorrectly referred to 2025 / 26. He then put the recommendations which were duly seconded and agreed.

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 Scheme for 2026 / 27 for Pensioners only;
 - b. that any legislative changes being introduced to the Housing Benefit Scheme, for 2026 / 27 are mirrored in the Council's LCTS to ensure consistency;
- (ii) that these decisions have been made following Members careful reading of and regard to the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 1 to the Council agenda;
- (iii) that Members note the largely unchanged framework for the Hardship Provision at Appendix 2 to the Council agenda;
- (iv) that the Policy document at Appendix 3 to the Council agenda be approved.

Business Rate and Council Tax Discretionary Policies

RESOLVED

- (i) That subject to incorporation of the provisional amendments (set out in the Addendum report to the Strategy and Resources Committee on 29 January 2026 (Appendix 4 to the Council Agenda), the amended Policy for the granting of Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief at Appendix 1 to the Council Agenda, to reflect updated Government guidance and legislation be approved;
- (ii) that the Director of Finance (S151 officer), in consultation with the Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee, is granted delegated powers to consider and make minor technical amendments to the Policy for the granting of Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief, in line with final Government guidance, as soon as reasonably practicable, to enable the award of this relief to eligible businesses;
- (iii) that minor amendments to the Empty Homes and Second Homes Premium Policy 2025 / 26 document at Appendix 2 to the Council Agenda be noted;
- (iv) that minor amendments to the Council Tax S13A (1) (C) Local Government Act 1992 Policy document at Appendix 3 to the Council Agenda be noted.

Councillor Driver reminded Members 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 9 – 2026 / 27 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

- Medium-Term Financial Strategy;
- Proposed Budget 2026 / 27;
- Capital and Investment Strategy for 2026 / 27, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2026 / 27 and Treasury Management Strategy 2026 / 27.

Councillor J R Burrell-Cook returned to the chamber at this point.

9. 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 4 February 2026 for which Minutes had been published.

10. NORTH ESSEX LOCAL GROWTH PRIORITIES

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

Members were reminded that the Council had considered the document at its meeting on 11 December 2025, where it had been recommended that the document be deferred and sent back to the NEC to consider inclusion of the items raised, including St. Peter's hospital, tourism, specific transport and skills & training. Following this the Director of the NEC (Mr Gwyn Owen) had attended a Group Leaders meeting where

clarity on some of the content of the proposed plan was sought. The Director of the NEC agreed to incorporate this feedback and the revised document was now presented to the Council (Appendix 1) for consideration.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and moved the recommendations set out in the report. These were duly seconded. The Head of Economic Development then provided further detail before introducing the Director of the NEC who gave a short presentation outlining the importance of having a unified North Essex position and how this would strengthen the strategic case for projects and increase the likelihood of securing transformative investment in the North of the county. He took Members through how their feedback had been taken on board and incorporated into the document and outlined the next steps.

Thanks were given to the NEC Director for the work he had undertaken to meet with Members and incorporate their feedback. The Council also gave its thanks to the Head of Economic Development for her work on this project.

The Chairperson then put the recommendations which were duly agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members acknowledged the amendments made to the document further to feedback;
- (ii) That the North Essex Local Growth Priorities (Appendix 1 to the report) be approved for the socio-economic benefit of the region and District.

11. 2026 / 27 BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Council considered the reports of the Director of Finance, on the recommendations of the Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 29 January 2026 relating to the revenue budget and the proposed level of Council for 2026 / 27.

The Leader of the Council made a budget speech (attached at **APPENDIX 1** to these Minutes), during which he thanked the Chief Finance Officer and his team for their hard work alongside the Finance Working Group. He advised Members that the proposed budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provided a financial framework and strategic plan for the Council, supporting its priorities and ensuring a long-term legacy was provided for the District. The Leader confirmed that the Council had the financial resources and dedicated workforce to meet the challenges ahead. He urged Members to endorse the proposed budget and MTFS to continue the vital work of serving the community and together, continue to deliver excellence for the Maldon District now and into the future.

The Leader of the Council then proposed that the recommendations set out in the reports at Agenda Items 9a – 9d be agreed. This proposal was duly seconded.

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

Councillor J Driver, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, thanked the Leader of the Council for sharing his budget speech in advance and acknowledged the collaborative and constructive culture that had developed within Maldon District Council. He noted the thorough work of the Finance Member Working Group and officers in producing a robust and transparent budget. It was highlighted that the budget was not only technically balanced but was also considered responsible, protecting essential

services, ensuring value for money, and enabling targeted investment through prudent borrowing to support projects across the district. Councillor Driver emphasised the importance of local councils in strengthening communities and called for fairer long-term funding settlements, as well as a strong Maldon voice in the transition to a unitary authority, particularly regarding key infrastructure such as health, education and medical services. He concluded by stating that the budget reflected the Liberal Democrats' commitment to constructive, positive change and encouraged the Council to carry forward the best of Maldon into the future.

Councillor S J Morgan, Leader of the Conservative Group, thanked the Leader of the Council for presenting the budget and acknowledged the collaborative work undertaken through the Finance Member Working Group. He noted that officers had provided clear guidance throughout the process and commented that this was the third budget he had experienced, each demonstrating continued improvement. Councillor Morgan highlighted the strengths of the district, including its valued services and strong waste contract, while recognising the challenges ahead as the move toward unitary authorities approached. He stressed the importance of leaving Maldon in a strong position and maintaining its unique character and confirmed that the Conservative Group would be supporting the budget.

Councillor W Stamp, Deputy Leader of the District Support Group (DSG) spoke on behalf of Councillor J C Stilts, Leader of the DSG, acknowledged the significant work undertaken by officers and Members in preparing the budget and MTFs, praising the professionalism of the Finance Team in producing a balanced financial plan during a challenging period for local government. She emphasised the opposition's role in scrutinising assumptions, ensuring fairness, and testing the realism of the administration's ambitions, particularly in light of rising service pressures, financial uncertainty and the implications of future Local Government Reorganisation. While welcoming investment in valued community assets, she stressed the need for transparency, equitable distribution across the district, and strong oversight of organisational transformation. Councillor Stamp noted ongoing concerns faced by residents, including cost-of-living pressures, access to services and affordable housing, and questioned whether a 2.9% Council Tax increase was justified given reserves and planned projects. She highlighted the risks associated with increased borrowing and urged robust business cases and financial resilience as the Council prepared for future challenges. She concluded by calling for fair investment, transparent reporting and prudent decision-making to ensure long-term sustainability for the district.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Leaders of the Opposition for their contributions and responded to the points raised. He acknowledged that while there were areas of deprivation within the district, Maldon remained comparatively less deprived nationally, which had influenced the limited government funding available. He outlined the aims of the Council's transformation programme, emphasising the need for efficient services delivered by staff in the right roles. The Leader explained that freezing car parking charges had been chosen as a simple and fair way to support residents, businesses, and visitors, and noted that the Council would need to consider borrowing for the first time, with final decisions dependent on the balance between borrowing and the use of reserves. He highlighted the opportunities for investment in community assets and encouraged Members to identify any unfunded ward priorities while these could still be considered. The Leader concluded that the budget represented a positive legacy for the district and thanked Members for their support.

In response to a question raised regarding Agenda Item 9b – Proposed Budget 2026 / 26 the Director of Finance directed Members to Appendix 2 (page 281 of the agenda pack) which provided a detailed analysis of the proposals brought forward, including where there were existing earmarked reserves which would be used to fund them.

The Director of Place, Planning and Growth provided the Council with information regarding the Council's review of its Local Development Plan (LDP) in response to a question, drawing attention to the Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) report due to be considered at a later point in this meeting. He explained how he was looking to progress an independent planning, project and resourcing plan to inform the Council's future consideration of whether it progressed with its LDP review under the new system and what progress could be made between now and the vesting day of the new Council. No specific request for monies were therefore included in the operational budget process, however he highlighted that should the Council agree a project resourcing plan then there were earmarked reserves that were included in the proposals which were available for this purpose.

The Chairperson proposed that the Council take the recommendations set out in reports 9a and 9c en-bloc. This was duly seconded.

In response to the debate that followed and questions raised the Director of Finance provided Members with additional information, which included:

- In respect of external borrowing these linked to previous decisions of the Council for which full business cases had been completed and approved. Any further investments would need full business case approval in the normal way. Internal Audit were preparing a report on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which would be presented to a future meeting of the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee.
- The Director advised that he was mindful of the likely application of Section 24 rules in due course and that this was also being discussed by Essex Finance Officers. However, he was happy with the budget the Council was proposing at this time as there were no proposals which would fall within the scope of a possible future S24 provision.

The Chief Executive commented that the Council had to be mindful of any decisions it was making of substantial financial commitment. In reference to earlier comments regarding Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, he reassured Members that Officers would speak to any colleagues who the Council may join up with and making sure that the Council was not over committing itself or any other council and taking on any liability that the future councils would not agree with.

The Chairperson then moved the recommendations set out in reports 9a and 9c and these were duly agreed.

Medium-Term Financial Strategy

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council considered the principles of the MTFS set out in the report and as recommended by the Strategy and Resources Committee, agreed any changes, and makes recommendations as appropriate to the Council;
- (ii) That the Council recognises that the MTFS has been developed through ongoing consultation with the Finance Member Working Group in its meetings from June 2025.

Capital and Investment Strategy for 2026 / 27, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2026 / 27 and Treasury Management Strategy 2026 / 27

RESOLVED that the following be approved:

- (i) the Capital and Investment Strategy 2026/27 (Appendix 1 to the report), which

includes the Capital Programme for 2026/27 – 2029/30 and new Capital Projects Bids (Appendix 2 to the report);

- (ii) the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2026/27 (Appendix 3 to the report);
- (iii) the Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27 (Appendix 4 to the report, with the Treasury Management Practices).

Proposed Budget 2026 / 27

In accordance with Procedure Rule 13(5) the Chairperson requested a recorded vote and this was duly seconded.

The Chairperson then read out the recommendations and put them to the Council. This was duly seconded.

In response to a query, the Monitoring Officer clarified that the recommendations in this report were assuming that this was the Council Tax band D level. If a Council Tax increase of 2.99% was not agreed this amount would be replaced with the amount agreed as part of the recommendations contained within the report at agenda item 9d. Therefore, Members could agree recommendations (i) to (viii) on block.

The Chairperson then moved the recommendations, and the voting was as follows:

For the recommendations:

Councillors M G Bassenger, V J Bell, J R Burrell-Cook, S Dodsley, J Driver, M F L Durham, A Fittock, L J Haywood, J C Hughes, K M H Lagan, A M Lay, W J Laybourn, S J N Morgan, C P Morley, R Pratt, R H Siddall, N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, E L Stephens, J C Stilts, N Swindle and M E Thompson.

Against the recommendations:

Councillors A S Fluker, U G C Siddall-Norman and W Stamp.

Abstentions: None.

RESOLVED that the following be approved:

- (i) The reduction in core spending power allocation as set out in the provisional financial settlement for local government (see section 4.2 of the report). The final settlement is expected in the week of 9 February, and any changes will be reported to the meeting.
- (ii) The base budget changes from 2025/26 to 2026/27 (section 4.4 and Appendix 1 to the report).
- (iii) The revenue budget growth bids received and recommended growth and savings as discussed by the Finance Member Working Group (section 4.7 and Appendix 2);
- (iv) The repairs and renewals schemes proposed for 2026/27 (section 4.8 and Appendix 3 to the report);
- (v) The budget assumes the average Band D Council Tax of £238.95 (excluding parish precepts), which is a £6.94 or 2.99% increase for 2026/27 (section 4.9 of the report). The formal council tax resolution to be approved by council is set out elsewhere on this agenda. The basis for calculating the charge is set out in Appendix 4 to the report;

- (vi) The impact on reserves and the current policy for reserves, including of a minimum general fund balance of £2.6m as discussed by the Finance Member Working Group (section 4.10 and Appendix 5 to the report);
- (vii) the proposed policy on 'excess' reserves (paragraph 4.11.3 of the report);
- (viii) the advice of the Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) regarding the robustness of budgets and adequacy of reserves (section 5.6 and Appendix 6 to the report).

Council Tax 2026 / 27

Councillor A S Fluker raised concerns regarding the budget before Members and the proposal to make investment in capital repairs and renewals, suggesting that in his view investment across the district appeared to be uneven. He further suggested that freezing Council Tax could mean that by the end of the Council's life a total of £600,000 would have been returned indirectly to local tax payers. Councillor Fluker proposed, contrary to the proposals put forward, that the Council Tax for Maldon District Council be held at the same level as in 2025 / 26 and that to cover the shortfall in the proposed budget £189,000 be taken from the Council's reserves. This proposal was duly seconded.

The Chairperson advised that this proposal would need to be taken as an amendment to the budget proposal.

In accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) Councillor A S Fluker requested a recorded vote. This was duly seconded.

The Chairperson then put the proposed amendment in the name of Councillor Fluker and the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

Councillors M F L Durham, A S Fluker, L J Haywood, U G C Siddall-Norman, W Stamp and J C Stilts,

Against the recommendation:

Councillors M G Bassenger, V J Bell, J R Burrell-Cook, S Dodsley, J Driver, A Fittock, J C Hughes, K M H Lagan, A M Lay, W J Laybourn, S J N Morgan, C P Morley, R Pratt, R H Siddall, N D Spenceley, P L Spenceley, E L Stephens, N Swindle and M E Thompson.

Abstention: None.

The Chairperson declared that the proposed amendment was therefore not agreed. He then put the recommendations as set out report and the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

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

Against the recommendation:

Councillors A S Fluker, L J Haywood, U G C Siddall-Norman, W Stamp and J C Stilts,

Abstention: None.

The Chairperson advised that this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) that Maldon District Council's Council Tax Requirement for 2026 / 27 is set at £6,521,662;
- (ii) that the Maldon District Council's Band D Council Tax (excluding Parish precepts) is set at £238.95, reflecting an increase of £6.94 (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 formal resolution set out at **APPENDIX 2** to these Minutes.

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

There were none.

13. MALDON FIVE-YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY 2025 CALCULATION

The Council considered the report of the Director of Place, Planning and Growth seeking Members' approval of the Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) calculation for the Maldon District as at 1 April 2025 and attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The report provided some background information regarding the 5YHLS and the calculation methodology. It was noted that the next calculation of the 5YHLS for the Maldon District was due in the summer of 2026 and would be undertaken in light of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) currently being consulted on, plus any updated guidance. Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 1 and the current 5YHLS calculation of 4.1 years, noting that until the Council could demonstrate five years' worth of housing land supply relevant policies within the Maldon Local Development Plan were considered out-of-date.

An update on the Local Plan review was set out in the report and implications of Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. Members were informed that a new Project & Resourcing Plan and Project Initiation Document for a Local Plan under the new system was being prepared and would be reported to the Council in Spring 2026, following consideration by the Planning Policy Working Group (PPWG).

Councillor A Fittock, Chairperson of the PPWG, presented the report and then proposed that the recommendations set out in the report be agreed. This proposal was duly seconded.

The Director of Place, Planning and Growth referred to the collaborative working with Members, particularly the PPWG. He highlighted how the report set out the calculation of 4.1 years and the implications of the Council having a 5YHLS of less than five years. Other matters such as Local Government Reorganisation and the Government's

proposed initiatives to get the development industry built quicker were being considered and he outlined how further update to the 5YHLS would take place in due course considering any case law update and guidance. In response to a question regarding the testing of the 5YHLS by planning appeals, the Director explained how the Council had been open and transparent regarding the sites that made up the 5YHLS and he hoped that any statement of common ground would confirm 4.1 years in line with what the Council had published.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations set out in the report and these were duly agreed. Thanks were given to Councillor Fittock for the work he done on the 5YHLS including assisting Members' understanding of the importance of looking at the data and getting the analysis correct.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Maldon Five-Year Housing Land Supply 2025 calculation position at 1 April 2025 (Appendix A to the report) is approved and published on the Council's website;
- (ii) That authority is delegated to the Director of Place, Planning and Growth to make minor amendments and corrections, if required, to the Maldon Five-Year Housing Land Supply 2025 document (Appendix A to the report) prior to publication; and
- (iii) That authority is delegated to the Director of Place, Planning and Growth in consultation with the Planning Policy Working Group, to review and update the methodology for calculating the Five-Year Housing Land Supply based upon the latest guidance, case law and legal advice.

14. EXTENSION OF SOUTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE AGREEMENT

The Council considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities seeking Members' approval to extend the current operational period of the South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP) Joint Committee agreement by a further year to 31 March 2028 to align with the current Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) timetable. It was noted that since 2011 the SEPP had delivered on-street parking enforcement across the District on behalf of Essex County Council (ECC) and there was no financial implication for Maldon District Council.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Communities presented the report and highlighted how an extension to the current SEPP agreement would ensure service continuity and legal enforcement of the parking restrictions throughout the Partnership areas for the financial year 2027 / 28. Thereafter the function would transfer and operation from 1 April 2028 under the new unitary authorities due to LGR in Essex.

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

RESOLVED that the extension until 31 March 2028 to the existing South Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee agreement be agreed.

15. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

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

The report provided background information regarding Devolution, how Terms of Reference had been drafted and a nominating body was being set up to agree which representation for District Authorities on the Greater Essex Combined County Authority (GECCA), or any other Committee, sub-working group or scrutiny committee established by the GECCA. All Leaders would be members of the nominating body and each devolution priority programme area would be provided with investment funds from the Government to ensure they can start delivering on key local priorities and benefits ahead of the mayors taking office in 2028.

In respect of LGR, Officers continued to work with colleagues across Essex on programme structures for its delivery, focusing on gathering information as set out by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Essex-wide workstream activity input had been established, progress and updates from all workstreams would continue to be shared with the Devolution and LGR Working Group (the Working Group).

Councillor W Stamp, Chairperson of the Devolution and LGR Working Group, referred to the Director of Strategy and Improvement who was shortly leaving the Council and thanked her for her work on this project. These thanks were reiterated by other Members of the Council. Councillor Stamp then introduced the report highlighting the work of the Working Group and asked Members to receive the update and acknowledge progress and the work that had been undertaken. Since production of the report, she advised that the Council had responded to a request from the MHCLG seeking information that would help to progress the work of the structural change order.

The Director of Legal and Governance provided the Council with further details regarding the information requested from the MHCLG, including a view in relation to the formation of the joint committees and other information which would be used to draft the structural changes order once the government had announced its minded to decision. The Council's response had been drafted in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chairperson of the Working Group. She reassured Members that Officers were continuing to work with colleagues across Essex gathering information.

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

In response to questions, the Chief Executive advised that there was no indication from the Government that Devolution and LGR would not happen, nor would there be a change to their direction of travel and at this time the Council had not been advised which Authorities it might join up with. The Council's Director of Finance and Director of Legal and Governance were working on the case for the five unitary authority model supported by this Council. The Leader of the Council advised that he had recently attended an MHCLG webinar where it has been reiterated that the timetable remained unchanged.

The Chairperson put the recommendation, and this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the Council notes the current update on Devolution and LGR, and any resource implications as the activity to progress LGR developed.

Appendix 1 and 2

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

K M H LAGAN
CHAIRPERSON

Leader's Budget Speech 2026 - Presented to Council, 12 February 2026

Good evening Members, officers, and residents. It is my privilege to once again present the proposed budget for the financial year 2026-2027. The annual budget and MTFs - Medium Term Financial Strategy are the result of months of collaborative work between officers and Members.

This budget builds on the strong foundations we have laid over the past few years and marks our ambition of investment, financial sustainability and excellent service provision for our district.

Reflecting on last year, we set ourselves the challenge of delivering a fully balanced budget without substantial use of our reserves. I am pleased to confirm that, through the dedication of officers and Members, and the constructive collaboration across all political groups and the nonaligned, we exceeded this objective and making a contribution to our reserves at the end of the year.

Together, we have developed a financial strategy that supports the Council's strategic priorities, invests and maintains our assets, and provides opportunities to create new assets for the future. At a time of change in local government, we are ensuring that we provide a long term legacy for the district.

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 preserving Maldon's unique identity and what we can do for the long-term benefit of the district.

Collaborative Efforts

Our financial progress is rooted in teamwork. I wish to recognise the commitment from our officers, led by our Director of Finance, Mr Jay and the Finance team, whose expertise and diligence have ensured clarity and strength in our financial planning.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to this achievement. Our Finance Member Working Group, for their diligent scrutiny and creative thinking, and the constructive contributions of elected Members from all political groups and the non aligned who have fostered a spirit of shared purpose and constructive challenge.

Strategic Priorities and Corporate Plan Alignment

In response to the recommendations from the financial peer review, our budget and financial strategy are now closely aligned with our Corporate Plan, ensuring we deliver on our commitment to residents, businesses, and visitors. Service plans are directly linked to the budget, enabling us to focus on what matters most for Maldon District.

Investment and supporting our Community

We continue to invest in improving the district for all.

Working together, we have continued to deliver for our residents. Our waste contract with Suez is delivering consistent, high-quality service, and the extension of Flex Collect plastics initiative, demonstrates our commitment to environmental responsibility. We can be proud to be the best recycling council in Essex, with the reintroduction of green food bags last year. Whilst other councils are still introducing food waste, we have implemented the service to all homes in the district.

The new contract with Places Leisure has enabled exciting new facilities at our leisure centres such as the new gym, adventure climb facility with more being developed this year,

The budget includes £5.1m of new investment for 2026/27, on top of the existing £13.5m base budget and £7.9m capital programme. This means there is £26m planned for local services and amenities to support residents and visitors.

We have a further £2.3m investment in parks and open spaces, including £1.3m to the Promenade Park in Maldon as well as Dengie 100 where there is a further £100,000 investment is proposed in addition to the existing £435,000; as well as a further £220,000 proposed to improve the roadways at Riverside Park. Beyond Maldon and Burnham, we also propose £1.4m for play sites and £200,000 for public conveniences - £1.6m for residents and visitors across all areas of the District. These investments will ensure these valued amenities will be enjoyed by many people long after reorganisation in Essex

This year's budget focuses on short-term, targeted investment to protect important local assets ahead of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Government is expected to clarify its plans for reorganisation before the new financial year. The 2027/28 budget will be the year of a Shadow Council and will largely be about preparing for LGR, limiting the ability to start new capital projects or contracts. Decisions will

increasingly be made jointly with the emerging shadow authority arrangements in place.

Partnerships

We recognise, however, that we cannot achieve everything alone. Our health and community partnerships have been fruitful, delivering health and well-being activities, prevention campaigns, and the work of One Maldon District Partnership.

Through this collaboration, we have allocated £60,000 to support organisations across the district. We have supported four community-based projects to enhance delivery and further support residents in areas of mental health, reducing social isolation and access to services.

Our popular UFest community event has grown from strength to strength, providing a showcase for our community organisations to engage and support our community with 2025 being the most successful so far.

Our Council offices have become a vibrant hub for partnership activity, **supporting** community safety and providing crucial services in partnership with the Police, Citizens Advice Bureau, Maldon and District CVS, and our housing partners.

I am also delighted to announce that very shortly a new Banking Hub will open in our offices, until their permanent premises are ready.

We have maintained our commitment to supporting those in need, meeting our refugee emergency response duties and strengthening our relationship with the NHS and the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board. This includes continuing the work to maintain St Peters and working with the NHS to deliver the long term future of health services within the district.

Our UK Shared Prosperity funding continues to support growth and opportunity, and we are proud of our track record in creating value for our district.

We created the community grant scheme aimed at delivering against the four outward facing Corporate Plan Priorities and have allocated around £300,000 for this fund from our own reserves. This recognises the Council's commitment to ensuring the District is a place 'Where Quality of Life Matters'.

Tourism continues to flourish, with the latest data showing increased overnight visitor numbers and a thriving local economy. The Saltmarsh Coast Walking Festival continues to grow with nearly 900 people taking part last year.

Members tonight you will also be asked to agree our annual schedule of Fees and Charges. Thanks to our financial prudence I am pleased to propose that our car park fees and charges will remain the same. This is good news for our high street businesses.

In terms of the **District Council** element of Council Tax, we are only proposing an average increase at Band D of 13p per week or an additional £6.76 per year. The important thing to recognise, is that although we collect council tax, the majority goes to other areas of local government. If we do not raise council tax, and as we have seen in other authorities across the country where the tax has not been increased and promises have been made, subsequently it leads to larger increases at a later date. There is a government expectation for all authorities to raise council tax and again we need to ensure we take a long term view.

Facing Challenges and Embracing Opportunities

We recognise that the local government landscape is evolving, with local government reorganisation and devolution presenting new challenges and priorities. Our new leadership structure encourages close collaboration and continuous improvement, ensuring we are prepared for change and focused on long-term benefits for our community.

In order to meet the challenges that lie ahead, the Council has embarked on a two phase Transforming Together programme which will create an organisation that empowers staff, supports clear and effective decision making, and ensures accountability at every level.

Phase 1, which has already been completed, has seen the replacing of the previous CLT+ consisting of the Chief Executive, plus 9, a Deputy Chief Executive and eight Assistant Directors and the introduction of a streamlined Senior Leadership Team with the Chief Executive, supported by five Directors, and is organised around five key Directorates—Neighbourhood Services & Communities, Place, Planning & Growth, Finance, Legal & Governance, and Strategy & Improvement.

We are currently in Phase 2 of our Transforming Together programme, which is the final phase, and will see the rest of the organisation structured in a way which will remove further layers of management and

invest in front line posts and enable staff to realise their full potential, deliver on ambitious goals and continue to provide the highest level of service to our residents.

Members, tonight you are asked to support a budget and financial strategy that reflect our collective ambition for Maldon District. We have the resources, the dedicated workforce, and the leadership to meet the challenges ahead.

It is only by working together that we can deliver for the district, we have shown that over the past 2.5 years. Thank you members for your continued spirit of cooperation and the excellent working relationships, we have with officers. It is through these principles that we can deliver for the district.

I urge you to endorse the proposed budget and MTFS, so that we may continue the vital work of serving our community and together, we will continue to deliver excellence for Maldon District now and into the future.

Thank you members and recommend the budget items 9a 9b 9c and 9d

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COUNCIL TAX 2026 / 27 RESOLUTION

The Council **RESOLVED**:

1. That it be noted that at its meeting on 11 December 2025 the Council calculated its Council Tax Base for the year 2026 / 27:
 - (a) for the whole district as **27,293.0** Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (the Act), as amended by the Localism Act 2011; and
 - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its district to which a Parish precept relates as listed below:

Althorne	518.0
Asheldham	68.4
Bradwell-on-Sea	353.3
Burnham-on-Crouch	3,877.1
Cold Norton	510.2
Dengie	47.2
Goldhanger	302.8
Great Braxted	193.5
Great Totham	1,526.4
Hazeleigh	166.9
Heybridge	2,895.2
Heybridge Basin	278.6
Langford	89.4
Latchingdon	535.7
Little Braxted	82.1
Little Totham	191.6
Maldon	6,037.9
Mayland	1,497.2
Mundon	149.6
North Fambridge	545.7
Purleigh	593.0
Southminster	1,653.4
St. Lawrence	611.1
Steeple	193.6
Stow Maries	90.3
Tillingham	409.9
Tollesbury	1,049.2
Tolleshunt D'arcy	450.1
Tolleshunt Knights	441.8
Tolleshunt Major	275.1
Ulting	83.1
Wickham Bishops	1,020.9
Woodham Mortimer	265.0
Woodham Walter	289.8
Total Parishes	27,293.0

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2. Calculate that the Council Tax Requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2026/27 (excluding Parish precepts) is £6,521,662.35.
3. That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2026 / 27 in accordance with new Sections 31 to 36 of the Act as amended:
 - (a) £34,095,400 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act, taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils **(i.e. gross expenditure including Parish precepts)**
 - (b) £25,400,481 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act **(i.e. gross income including government grants)**
 - (c) £8,694,919 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax Requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act) **(i.e. Council Tax Requirement including Parish precepts)**.
 - (d) £318.58 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R) divided by the amount at 1(a) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year **(i.e. average Band D Council Tax including Parish precepts)**
 - (e) £2,173,257 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act **(i.e. Parish Council precepts)**
 - (f) £238.95 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates **(i.e. District Council Band D Council Tax excluding Parish precepts)**.
 - (g) Basic Amount of Council Tax by Parish 2026 / 27

Town/Parish	Local Precept	Town/Parish Band D	District + Town/Parish Band D
Althorne	29,344.00	56.65	295.60
Asheldham	4,402.81	64.37	303.32
Bradwell-on-Sea	28,843.00	81.64	320.59
Burnham-on-Crouch	274,147.50	70.71	309.66
Cold Norton	49,499.00	97.02	335.97
Dengie	3,038.19	64.37	303.32
Goldhanger	12,750.00	42.11	281.06

Town/Parish	Local Precept	Town/Parish Band D	District + Town/Parish Band D
Great Braxted	17,417.00	90.01	328.96
Great Totham	51,660.00	33.84	272.79
Hazeleigh	3,089.91	18.51	257.46
Heybridge	320,000.00	110.53	349.48
Heybridge Basin	29,000.00	104.09	343.04
Langford	9,539.00	106.70	345.65
Latchingdon	44,265.00	82.63	321.58
Little Braxted	5,335.00	65.06	304.01
Little Totham	9,983.00	52.10	291.05
Maldon	526,640.35	87.22	326.17
Mayland	107,428.00	71.75	310.70
Mundon	9,600.00	64.17	303.12
North Fambridge	34,630.70	63.46	302.41
Purleigh	53,500.00	90.22	329.17
Southminster	179,127.30	108.34	347.29
St. Lawrence	36,962.00	60.48	299.43
Steeple	14,848.00	76.69	315.64
Stow Maries	8,417.00	93.21	332.16
Tillingham	40,000.00	97.58	336.53
Tollesbury	132,665.80	126.44	365.39
Tolleshunt D'arcy	26,890.00	59.74	298.69
Tolleshunt Knights	23,000.00	52.06	291.01
Tolleshunt Major	14,000.00	50.89	289.84
Ulting	7,231.00	87.02	325.97
Wickham Bishops	26,200.00	25.66	264.61
Woodham Mortimer	4,906.09	18.51	257.46
Woodham Walter	34,897.00	120.42	359.37

These amounts are calculated by adding to the amount at 3(f) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Councils area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

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(h) Calculation of Basic Amounts of Council Tax by Parish for Different Valuation Bands

District & Parish Town	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Althorne	197.07	229.91	262.76	295.60	361.29	426.98	492.67	591.20
Asheldham	202.21	235.92	269.62	303.32	370.72	438.13	505.53	606.64
Bradwell-on-Sea	213.73	249.35	284.97	320.59	391.83	463.07	534.32	641.18
Burnham-on-Crouch	206.44	240.85	275.25	309.66	378.47	447.29	516.10	619.32
Cold Norton	223.98	261.31	298.64	335.97	410.63	485.29	559.95	671.94
Dengie	202.21	235.92	269.62	303.32	370.72	438.13	505.53	606.64
Goldhanger	187.37	218.60	249.83	281.06	343.52	405.98	468.43	562.12
Great Braxted	219.31	255.86	292.41	328.96	402.06	475.16	548.27	657.92
Great Totham	181.86	212.17	242.48	272.79	333.41	394.03	454.65	545.58
Hazeleigh	171.64	200.25	228.85	257.46	314.67	371.89	429.10	514.92
Heybridge	232.99	271.82	310.65	349.48	427.14	504.80	582.47	698.96
Heybridge Basin	228.69	266.81	304.92	343.04	419.27	495.50	571.73	686.08
Langford	230.43	268.84	307.24	345.65	422.46	499.27	576.08	691.30
Latchingdon	214.39	250.12	285.85	321.58	393.04	464.50	535.97	643.16
Little Braxted	202.67	236.45	270.23	304.01	371.57	439.13	506.68	608.02
Little Totham	194.03	226.37	258.71	291.05	355.73	420.41	485.08	582.10
Maldon	217.45	253.69	289.93	326.17	398.65	471.13	543.62	652.34
Mayland	207.13	241.66	276.18	310.70	379.74	448.79	517.83	621.40
Mundon	202.08	235.76	269.44	303.12	370.48	437.84	505.20	606.24
North Fambridge	201.61	235.21	268.81	302.41	369.61	436.81	504.02	604.82
Purleigh	219.45	256.02	292.60	329.17	402.32	475.47	548.62	658.34
Southminster	231.53	270.11	308.70	347.29	424.47	501.64	578.82	694.58
St. Lawrence	199.62	232.89	266.16	299.43	365.97	432.51	499.05	598.86
Steeple	210.43	245.50	280.57	315.64	385.78	455.92	526.07	631.28
Stow Maries	221.44	258.35	295.25	332.16	405.97	479.79	553.60	664.32
Tillingham	224.35	261.75	299.14	336.53	411.31	486.10	560.88	673.06
Tollesbury	243.59	284.19	324.79	365.39	446.59	527.79	608.98	730.78
Tolleshunt D'arcy	199.13	232.31	265.50	298.69	365.07	431.44	497.82	597.38
Tolleshunt Knights	194.01	226.34	258.68	291.01	355.68	420.35	485.02	582.02
Tolleshunt Major	193.23	225.43	257.64	289.84	354.25	418.66	483.07	579.68
Ulting	217.31	253.53	289.75	325.97	398.41	470.85	543.28	651.94
Wickham Bishops	176.41	205.81	235.21	264.61	323.41	382.21	441.02	529.22
Woodham Mortimer	171.64	200.25	228.85	257.46	314.67	371.89	429.10	514.92
Woodham Walter	239.58	279.51	319.44	359.37	439.23	519.09	598.95	718.74

These amounts are calculated by multiplying the amounts at 3(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band, divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D, calculated by the

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Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year, in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

That it be noted for the year 2026 / 27 the major precepting authorities have issued precepts to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below:

Precepting Authority	Valuation Bands			
Essex County Council	A	£1,094.64	E	£2,006.84
	B	£1,277.08	F	£2,371.72
	C	£1,459.52	G	£2,736.60
	D	£1,641.96	H	£3,283.92
Essex PFCC F&RA Essex Police and Crime Commissioner	A	£183.54	E	£336.49
	B	£214.13	F	£397.67
	C	£244.72	G	£458.85
	D	£275.31	H	£550.62
Essex PFCC F&RA Essex Fire and Rescue Authority	A	£61.68	E	£113.08
	B	£71.96	F	£133.64
	C	£82.24	G	£154.20
	D	£92.52	H	£185.04

5. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3(h) and 4 above, the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2026 / 27 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwelling shown in Table A attached.
6. Determines that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2026 / 27 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.

As the billing authority, the Council has not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2026 / 27 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.

TABLE A

**Total Council Tax Amounts (£) by Band and Area
2026/27**

Parish/Area	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Althorne	1,536.93	1,793.08	2,049.24	2,305.39	2,817.70	3,330.01	3,842.32	4,610.78
Asheldham	1,542.07	1,799.09	2,056.10	2,313.11	2,827.13	3,341.16	3,855.18	4,626.22
Bradwell-on-Sea	1,553.59	1,812.52	2,071.45	2,330.38	2,848.24	3,366.10	3,883.97	4,660.76
Burnham-on-Crouch	1,546.30	1,804.02	2,061.73	2,319.45	2,834.88	3,350.32	3,865.75	4,638.90
Cold Norton	1,563.84	1,824.48	2,085.12	2,345.76	2,867.04	3,388.32	3,909.60	4,691.52
Dengie	1,542.07	1,799.09	2,056.10	2,313.11	2,827.13	3,341.16	3,855.18	4,626.22
Goldhanger	1,527.23	1,781.77	2,036.31	2,290.85	2,799.93	3,309.01	3,818.08	4,581.70
Great Braxted	1,559.17	1,819.03	2,078.89	2,338.75	2,858.47	3,378.19	3,897.92	4,677.50
Great Totham	1,521.72	1,775.34	2,028.96	2,282.58	2,789.82	3,297.06	3,804.30	4,565.16
Hazeleigh	1,511.50	1,763.42	2,015.33	2,267.25	2,771.08	3,274.92	3,778.75	4,534.50
Heybridge	1,572.85	1,834.99	2,097.13	2,359.27	2,883.55	3,407.83	3,932.12	4,718.54
Heybridge Basin	1,568.55	1,829.98	2,091.40	2,352.83	2,875.68	3,398.53	3,921.38	4,705.66
Langford	1,570.29	1,832.01	2,093.72	2,355.44	2,878.87	3,402.30	3,925.73	4,710.88
Latchingdon	1,554.25	1,813.29	2,072.33	2,331.37	2,849.45	3,367.53	3,885.62	4,662.74
Little Braxted	1,542.53	1,799.62	2,056.71	2,313.80	2,827.98	3,342.16	3,856.33	4,627.60
Little Totham	1,533.89	1,789.54	2,045.19	2,300.84	2,812.14	3,323.44	3,834.73	4,601.68
Maldon	1,557.31	1,816.86	2,076.41	2,335.96	2,855.06	3,374.16	3,893.27	4,671.92
Mayland	1,546.99	1,804.83	2,062.66	2,320.49	2,836.15	3,351.82	3,867.48	4,640.98
Mundon	1,541.94	1,798.93	2,055.92	2,312.91	2,826.89	3,340.87	3,854.85	4,625.82
North Fambridge	1,541.47	1,798.38	2,055.29	2,312.20	2,826.02	3,339.84	3,853.67	4,624.40
Purleigh	1,559.31	1,819.19	2,079.08	2,338.96	2,858.73	3,378.50	3,898.27	4,677.92
Southminster	1,571.39	1,833.28	2,095.18	2,357.08	2,880.88	3,404.67	3,928.47	4,714.16
St. Lawrence	1,539.48	1,796.06	2,052.64	2,309.22	2,822.38	3,335.54	3,848.70	4,618.44
Steeple	1,550.29	1,808.67	2,067.05	2,325.43	2,842.19	3,358.95	3,875.72	4,650.86
Stow Maries	1,561.30	1,821.52	2,081.73	2,341.95	2,862.38	3,382.82	3,903.25	4,683.90
Tillingham	1,564.21	1,824.92	2,085.62	2,346.32	2,867.72	3,389.13	3,910.53	4,692.64
Tollesbury	1,583.45	1,847.36	2,111.27	2,375.18	2,903.00	3,430.82	3,958.63	4,750.36
Tolleshunt D'arcy	1,538.99	1,795.48	2,051.98	2,308.48	2,821.48	3,334.47	3,847.47	4,616.96
Tolleshunt Knights	1,533.87	1,789.51	2,045.16	2,300.80	2,812.09	3,323.38	3,834.67	4,601.60
Tolleshunt Major	1,533.09	1,788.60	2,044.12	2,299.63	2,810.66	3,321.69	3,832.72	4,599.26
Ulting	1,557.17	1,816.70	2,076.23	2,335.76	2,854.82	3,373.88	3,892.93	4,671.52
Wickham Bishops	1,516.27	1,768.98	2,021.69	2,274.40	2,779.82	3,285.24	3,790.67	4,548.80
Woodham Mortimer	1,511.50	1,763.42	2,015.33	2,267.25	2,771.08	3,274.92	3,778.75	4,534.50
Woodham Walter	1,579.44	1,842.68	2,105.92	2,369.16	2,895.64	3,422.12	3,948.60	4,738.32