

CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on 6 December 2023 at 7pm

PRESENT:

The Mayor, L A. Mascot
The Deputy Mayor J A. Deakin

Councillors C Adutwim, J Armstrong, V Canning, D Clark, H Clark, P Clark, P Davey, A E Davidson, C K Davidson, S Davis, S Dobson, N A Dudley, D Eley, K Franks, L Foster, J A Frasca, I D Fuller, M C Goldman, S M Goldman, S Hall, J Hawkins, R J Hyland, J Jeapes, A John, B Knight, J Lardge, R J Lee, L Mascot, B. Massey R J Moore, M O'Brien, V Pappa, G H J Pooley, J A Potter, S Rajesh, J M C Raven, S J Robinson, E Sampson, T Sherlock, M Sismey, A B Sosin, J E Sosin, M S Steel, S Sullivan, A Thompson, A G Thorpe-Apps, N M Walsh, R T Whitehead, and S Young

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bugbee, Chambers, Grundy, Scott, Tron, and Wilson.

2. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor provided an update on their engagements heading into the busy festive period, expecting to have attended a total 255 engagements by the end of the calendar year.

The Mayor reflected on the recent Remembrance Sunday service, emphasising their pride in the opportunity to introduce the Mayors Cadet, Sgt Walledge, at the event.

The Mayor also thanked the members of the council for their contributions to their collection for the foodbank.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded to declare at the appropriate time any personal and prejudicial interests in the business on the meeting's agenda.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

5. Public Questions

No public questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting.

6. Cabinet Question Time

The following questions from Councillors were put to members of the Cabinet:

1. Question from Councillor B Massey to the Cabinet Member for a Greener and Safer Chelmsford

We welcome the continued commitment to tree planting by the City Council at Compass Gardens, and hope the new planting is more successful than the 2020 planting by volunteers at Creekview Green.

Unfortunately, the City Council chose not to advise local ward members that the planting was planned, meaning we were unable to respond to residents' questions and concerns.

Would the Cabinet Member for Greener Chelmsford please consider notifying Ward members when future planting is being planned?

In response, the Cabinet Member for Greener and Safer Chelmsford expressed their gratitude for the Council wide support for this commitment as tree-planting plays a vital role in our Climate & Ecological Emergency Action Plan, as well as flood alleviation. They advised that the recent planting had been advertised on local notice boards and through the Town Council but acknowledged that no invitation had been sent directly to the ward councillor and agreed that this will be done for any future sessions across the city.

2. Question from Councillor S Sullivan to the Cabinet Member for a Fairer Chelmsford

The winter weather has arrived, with a record November cold snap and forecasts of more to come. This is especially challenging for the rough sleepers on the streets in Chelmsford. The recent Conservative central government announcement says it has allocated £148.4 million to 46 local authorities, housing providers, and charities as part of the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme to build or buy 1,230 homes, supporting the most vulnerable in our society and helping them off the streets for good. Has Chelmsford council applied for this funding?

In response, the Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford stated that maintaining that no one needs to sleep rough in Chelmsford is a priority for the Council. Chelmsford City Council was one of only two local housing authorities in Essex eligible to apply for this funding and a successful bid for a project providing 15 units was submitted, alongside CHESS. As schemes funded under this project must be completed before March 2025, no other projects would be considered suitable at this time, but once other sites can be identified the Council is hopeful that alternative funding will be secured.

(7.07pm to 7.18pm)

7. Reports from the Cabinet

7.1 Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

The Council received a report asking them to consider the recommendations of the Constitutional Working Group and Governance Committee outlining amendments to the Constitution relating to delegations to the Legal and Democratic Services Manager and voting procedures at meetings.

RESOLVED that the recommendations outlined in Appendix 1 of the report be agreed.

(7.18pm to 7.20pm)

7.2 Treasury Management Mid-Year Review

The Council received a report outlining the treasury activities undertaken in the first part of the 2023/2024 financial year and to report on compliance with the approved treasury management strategy.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted with no changes required to the ongoing treasury management strategy.

(7.20pm to 7.21pm)

8. Reports from the Leader of the Council

8.1 Review of Scheme of Members Allowances

The outcome of the review of the existing members allowance scheme was presented to the Council. The review was conducted by an Independent Remuneration Panel during the statutory period. Members of the Council were invited to engage in a consultation that advised the panel, with around two thirds of them having done so.

It was summarised that the main differentiation from the outcome of the review conducted in 2019 was the introduction of allowances for the newly appointed Independent Persons for Audit and Risk Committee.

In response to a question, it was advised that the determination of the allowances was calculated by the Independent Remuneration Panel, using the special responsibility allowance of the Leader of the Council as the foundation of these calculations.

RESOLVED that the scheme of allowances, as recommended by the panel, be agreed.

(7.21pm to 7.25pm)

8.2 Committee Memberships

The Council received a report detailing a proposed change to the membership of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with Cllr Wilson joining the Committee in the place of Cllr Taylor.

RESOLVED that the change to the membership of this Committee be agreed.

(7.25pm to 7.26pm)

8.3 Our Chelmsford Our Plan

The Council received a report outlining the renewed priorities of 'Our Chelmsford Our Plan', expanding on the ambitions set out in 2020 when the plan was adopted. The plan has been reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Cabinet and sets out how the Council intends to facilitate a greener, fairer and better connected City.

The renewed framework breaks down 9 strategic priorities, including tackling the housing crisis by building affordable homes and creating communities as well as reducing the carbon footprint of both the Council and the wider district.

In response to questions raised, the importance of biodiversity was discussed, alongside the balance of accessibility and safety in the community. The Council wishes to work alongside residents to ensure that this balance is appropriate and encourages those with feedback on individual sites to contact officers to discuss this.

During discussions, the Council's commitment to good financial management during challenging times was reaffirmed and support was offered to the ongoing cultural strategy and endorsing inclusivity and building resilient communities.

RESOLVED that the strategic direction and the key priorities set out in 'Our Chelmsford Our Plan' be approved.

(7.26pm to 7.41pm)

9. Notice of Motion

A notice of motion was presented to the Council by Cllr Dan Clark regarding the packaging and promotion of disposable vapes, using bright colours and a wide variety of flavours to catch the attention of shoppers. The impact that this has on young people, the environment and the wider community in Chelmsford was considered a concern that the Council must recognise and mitigate.

Whilst it was acknowledged that vaping has been used as an effective tool in quitting smoking by many, the health, social and financial implications of vaping amongst

young people were discussed, acknowledging that the long-term health effects of this are still unknown.

Cllr Ann Davidson seconded the motion and shared her experience of speaking with local teachers and learning the impact that this issue is having on schools.

The environmental and operational consequences of disposable vapes, both nationally and locally were stressed. It was reported that volunteers completing litter picks frequently find them on streets and in parks across the district. Disposal of the hazardous materials within the devices falls to the responsibility of the Council, raising safety concerns for refuse staff as well as being at great expense to the Council.

During discussion on the matter, attention was drawn to the consultation currently being undertaken by the government regarding restrictions on vaping flavours and packaging. The opportunity to ban the sale of disposable vapes in any council owned properties, including shopping centres was considered and commitment to reviewing the trading policies was made.

It was also noted that although regulation and legislation of such vapes may not be in the remit of the Council, it is important for the Council to use its platform to raise concerns and push for positive change.

RESOLVED that the motion be carried, and the Council calls for:
calls for;

- a. Vaping products to be in plain packaging and kept out of sight behind the counter.
- b. Mandatory age-of-sale signage on vaping products (this is currently voluntary)
- c. A ban on free samples of vaping products being given out to people of any age, or if they contain nicotine.
- d. A ban on the sale of single-use vaping products in the UK
- e. The Council will commit to not allowing sale of vaping products in any Chelmsford City Council run premises.

And that Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to both Victoria Atkins and Steve Barclay MP's, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and Secretary of State for Environment respectively, to express the Council's demand for the greater regulation of vaping products detailed in this motion and ban on the sale of single-use vapes.

(7.41pm to 7.59pm)

Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED that the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of Item 10 on the agenda as it contained exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

10. Chelmer Waterside Developer Selection

Public interest statement: It is not in the public interest to release details of this report at present, on the grounds that the report contains information that is commercially sensitive and to place the information in the public realm will be detrimental to the negotiations to be undertaken by the Council.

The Council received a report outlining the recommendations made by the Chelmer Waterside Panel regarding preferred development partners for the project. The proposals by each party were summarised within the report and it was highlighted that the recommended partner was compliant with the Councils Development Framework and provided the best return for the Council.

It was emphasised that at this stage in the process the only commitment being endorsed was that to the development partner, not to a specific delivery mechanism for the scheme. The options for delivery are to be discussed in greater detail and will be presented to the Council at a later date for approval. A variety of structures for the scheme are still being considered at this time.

The recommendation of the report was verbally amended by the Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford to the following to clarify this:

“That Council endorse the recommendation of the Chelmer Waterside Panel to select the preferred development partner, allowing officers to **discuss options** before returning to Full Council for a final decision.”

As a result of the amendment to the recommendation, two amendments submitted by the Conservative group were satisfied and withdrawn.

During discussion on the report, the importance of the Council maintaining input on the future of the site was stressed, allowing the opportunity to ensure that community, green spaces and healthy living are prioritised within the plans.

It was also noted that to ensure that the requirements of the grant awarded by Homes England are satisfied, the project must progress appropriately and that the Council is updating Homes England as matters progress.

RESOLVED that Council endorses the recommendations of the Chelmer Waterside Panel to select the preferred development partner, allowing officers to discuss options before returning to Full Council for a final decision.

(7.59pm to 8.19pm)

The meeting closed at 8.20pm

Mayor