MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 14TH JANUARY, 2026 AT 7.30 PM IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA, CO15 1SE

Present:	Councillors P Honeywood (Chairman), Bush, Bensilum, Doyle, J Henderson, S Honeywood, Newton and Steady
Also Present:	Councillor I Henderson (Deputy Leader of the Council; Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration & Tourism; Leader of the Labour Group) and M Stephenson (Leader of the Council; Portfolio Holder for Finance & Governance)
In Attendance:	Ian Davidson (Chief Executive), Richard Barrett (Corporate Director (Finance and IT) & Section 151 Officer), Lisa Hastings (Corporate Director (Law & Governance) & Monitoring Officer), Damian Williams (Corporate Director (Operations and Delivery)), Tim Clarke (Assistant Director (Housing and Environment)), Keith Simmons (Assistant Director (Corporate Policy & Support) & Deputy Monitoring Officer), Katie Koppenaal (Democratic Services Officer) and Bethany Jones (Democratic Services Officer)

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence had been submitted by Councillor Amos, who had appointed Councillor S Honeywood as his substitute. Apologies for absence had also been submitted by Councillor Goldman, who had appointed Councillor Doyle as his substitute and by Councillor Harris who had not appointed a substitute.

Additionally, apologies had been received from Councillor Baker, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning, who had been invited to attend but was unwell.

It was noted that for the public record, the Corporate Director (Law and Governance) and Monitoring Officer, was in attendance at the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

27. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was moved by Councillor Steady, seconded by Councillor Bush and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 4 November 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting had referenced a proposed conversation between the Section 151 Officer and Councillor Steady. As a result of that discussion, a flow chart was circulated at the meeting that had been published in the public domain.

Additionally, an email exchange between the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Committee, was circulated at the meeting that had been also published in the public domain.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made by Members on this occasion.

29. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38

No Questions on Notice pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 38 had been submitted by Members for this meeting.

30. REFERENCE FROM THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH GROUP - A.1 - FINAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Committee noted for the public record, that Members had prepared questions prior to the meeting, upon which Officers had drafted responses. Those questions and responses were not read out individually but referenced several times in supplementary questions. It was therefore agreed that those questions would be included in the minutes.

It was reported that at the meeting of Council held on 6 August 2024, the work programme for the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees had been approved. This had included, within the scope of this Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, an enquiry into housing strategy development and infrastructure and temporary accommodation with the enquiry having been undertaken by way of a task and finish group.

The report presented to the Committee had sought to set out the process of the enquiry into the above and its conclusions and recommendations.

Members heard that the aims and objectives of the enquiry had been to look at Housing Strategy Development and Infrastructure and Temporary Accommodation. The enquiry had included a look at how the Council maintained its list of private landlords and if the Council had suitably quality checked those properties.

The enquiry had reviewed:

- Policy and practice documents of the Council in respect of the use of private rented accommodation for those in need of housing.
- The average time people are placed in temporary rented housing accommodation.
- Details of complaints by those people in rental accommodation.
- Numbers of HRA properties over the last five years including acquisitions and disposals.
- The current housing strategy and any development draft of a new strategy as well as an assessment as to how the current strategy had been delivered.

The enquiry had sought as an outcome:

- To look at possible improvements to temporary accommodation provision and make recommendations thereon.
- To determine the strategic direction of the Council in respect of housing and the extent to which this had been delivered.

It was reported that following the four main meetings of the working group during which key topics had been discussed and questions answered by Officers, the outcome of the enquiry has been a set of observations to be reported to the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Those observations were:

1. That homelessness and temporary accommodation us a significant pressure for the Council, particularly the costs associated with temporary accommodation.
2. Resourcing within the Housing Solutions service could be increased to provide more early prevention work.
3. The Council had been improving the temporary accommodation that it had offered, moving away from B&B use.
4. Complaints about temporary accommodation had been generally low.
5. The Council's Housing Strategy for 2026-30 had been comprehensive and a well written document.
6. The Council's Housing Service had been preparing for inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing and would be assessed against compliance within the Consumer Standards.
7. The Council had annually compiled data on and reports on performance against the Tenant Satisfaction Measures with an overall improvement in performance between 2023-24 and 2024-25, with the exception of satisfaction of housing repairs.

It was moved by Councillor Bensilum, seconded by Councillor Bush and **RESOLVED** that the Committee:-

(a) notes the contents of the report, including the wide range of work undertaken by the Council's Housing Service to improve the homelessness and temporary accommodation service;

(b) requests that the Head of Paid Service ensure that the Council's Housing Solutions Service is adequately resourced to meet the increasing service demands including provision for homelessness prevention work;

(c) ensure that the draft temporary accommodation strategy continues to be improved both in terms of quality and price;

(d) endorses that Housing Strategy 2026-30 that is due to be submitted to Full Council in January 2026;

(e) requests that the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning ensure that the ambitions within the Housing Strategy 2026-30 along with key statistics relating to homelessness, temporary accommodation and the Council's own housing stock are monitored, measured and that a report is presented on progress to Cabinet and the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee each quarter;

(f) requests that the Head of Paid Service ensure that the Council's Housing Service is adequately resourced to meet the requirements of the Consumer Standards and is well prepared for the anticipated inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing; and

(g) requests the Cabinet to consult with this Committee on the Council's Draft Homelessness Strategy.

31. REFERENCE FROM THE CABINET - A.2 - APPROVAL OF DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY 2026/30 FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

The Committee was furnished with a reference report from the Cabinet for the consideration of the draft Housing Strategy 2026/30, and to decide whether it wished to submit any comments and/or recommendations thereon to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning.

Members were reminded that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 19 December 2025 (Minute 90 refers), had considered a report of the Housing and Planning Portfolio Holder (A.4) which had informed it of the outcome following the consultation on the draft Housing Strategy 2026-30 and which had sought Cabinet's approval of the final Housing Strategy 2026-30.

Cabinet had recalled that, at its meeting held on 26 September 2025, it had approved a draft Housing Strategy 2026-30 for consultation. That consultation had been launched on 6 October 2025 with a questionnaire available on the Council's website.

It had been reported that 24 responses to the consultation had been received via the online survey form with 92% agreeing with the proposed length of the strategy and 92% agreeing with the four strategic priorities. Several comments had been received that were summarised within the Portfolio Holder's report.

Members had been advised that Essex County Council (ECC) had submitted a detailed response that in essence stated "*ECC welcomes the development of this Housing Strategy and the clear articulation of Tendring's priorities. The document is well-structured and provides a strong narrative about the local context, including the challenges of deprivation, an ageing population, and housing affordability. We particularly value the emphasis on partnership working and the recognition of the role of Essex County Council in delivering shared objectives."*

It was reported that overall, the responses to the consultation had not required the draft strategy to be substantially altered. Reflecting the feedback received, some minor adjustments has been made. The proposed final version of the strategy had set out notable achievements along with ambitions across four strategic priorities:-

1. Maintain and improve our existing housing stock

That had focussed on the Council's role as a landlord and the management of its homes ensuring compliance with its statutory obligations along with the Consumer Standards and Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

2. Preventing and reducing homelessness

With homelessness having increased and most councils facing significant cost pressures this priority had set out what the Council had been doing to reduce expenditure and increase its prevention work.

3. Delivering, with partners, high quality homes

That priority focussed on the delivery of affordable housing in the District.

4. Supporting people in their homes and communities

That priority had been aimed at those living in the privately rented sector and those who had owned their own homes. It set out what the Council had been doing to ensure housing standards were maintained across all tenures.

In order to:-

(1) ensure that the new Housing Strategy would be appropriately adopted, following consultation with the public, other relevant authorities and both internal and external stakeholders, in accordance with the Council's Constitution; and

(2) acknowledge appropriately that the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been yet to review the proposed final version of the Housing Strategy, although a Task and Finish Working Group had discussed the draft strategy at its meeting on 3 November 2025 and had been largely supportive of it, and had been due to report to the Committee on 14 January 2026:-

Cabinet had **RESOLVED** that the Cabinet –

(a) notes the responses to the consultation on the draft Housing Strategy 2026-30;

(b) agrees the final Housing Strategy 2026/30 and recommends it for adoption by Full Council at its meeting due to be held on 27 January 2026; and

(c) authorises the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning to make amendments to the final version of the strategy prior to its approval by Full Council in response to any recommendations made by the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 14 January 2026.

Questions by Members:	**Answers given:**
What does the Strategy say about Tendring District Council (TDC) acquiring additional properties to support housing provision locally?	*In Priority 3 - Delivering, with partners, high quality homes there is an ambition to:* *Acquire new Council homes of a good standard to add to our stock including:* *- 30 new Council homes in the pipeline for 2025* *- At least 11 new flats in Carnarvon Road civic centre.* *- 8 new flats in Victoria Street*
In the answer to the previous question, it states "30 new Council homes in the	(Tim Clark) Yes, it should state '2026'.

pipeline for 2025", should the year be "2026"? How does that number of new properties compare with previous years?	(Damian Williams) In recent years, the strategy has comprised a combination of gifted, purchased, and newly built properties. Between 2020 and the end of that administration—when the first Housing Strategy was introduced—we gifted, built, or acquired a total of 61 properties. From July 2023 to January 2026, a further 61 properties were delivered through the same mix of gifting, construction, and purchase.
How does this Strategy align with the comparator Strategies of those Councils we could be combined with as part of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)?	*Alignment with Colchester and Braintree's housing strategies was not possible due to differing dates although both responded to the consultation.* *Our Officers have held some meetings with Colchester Borough Homes during 2025 with a view to LGR alignment and during 2026 we will be reaching out to include officers from Braintree in those conversations.*
Concerning the alignment of strategies that could be in the Unitary Authority, where is the converging of policies going to come in?	(Councillor M Stephenson) We manage our own housing stock, Colchester operates through an arm's-length housing company, and Braintree does not hold any housing stock. Integrating these three arrangements is a complex undertaking that cannot be achieved quickly. Due to significant operational differences, aligning the respective strategies is not currently feasible. (Ian Davidson) The composition of the future Unitary Authority has not yet been determined. It is possible that we may be grouped with Maldon rather than Braintree, but no final decision will be made until March 2026, when the outcome is expected. The question regarding housing is an important one, but it spans a wide range of services delivered by the councils. Some functions are operated quite differently, while others are more closely aligned. However, it is unlikely that services will be fully harmonised by 1 April 2028. The new authority will require time to assess operational models, establish its preferred

	approach, and set its strategic priorities.
I understand that Colchester City Council's housing stock is operated by an arm's length company. Does that arrangement have any break clause or renewal date. If not, does this pose a problem for any new combined unitary created by LGR?	*We do not know the detail of that arrangement. Colchester Borough Homes is an arm's length management organisation (ALMO) wholly owned by Colchester City Council and as such will transfer over to the new unitary authority. The unitary council will then be at liberty to decide how it wishes to run the housing stock that it becomes responsible for, be that via an ALMO or directly through the council such as we do here currently.* *Any such change would require there to be a consultation with the tenants of those homes, with the view of those tenants taken into account.*
Aside from the Spendells project, what measures have been implemented to address and reduce homelessness within the District?	*Spendells House is a temporary accommodation scheme and as such not aimed at reducing or addressing homelessness other than the provision of good quality temporary accommodation.* *Following the Cabinet meeting on 11 April 2025 a Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Working Group has been set up. You can read an update on the initial outcomes from that group when the Cabinet papers are published for the 30 January meeting.*
What impacts locally are anticipated as a result of the Renters Reform Act? Please cover the supply of rental accommodation, the extent to which tenants will become homeless and on the homelessness service of the council.	*The reality is that it is too soon to say definitively.* *The intended consequence of the Act, especially the abolition of s21 no fault evictions and fixed term tenancies, is that homelessness is reduced. However an unintended consequence is that landlords decide to leave the market reducing the pool of privately rented homes and consequently increasing homelessness.* *The impacts will be closely monitored.*
Can you reiterate the impact of the Renters Reform Act on the service of the Council?	(Cllr. M Stephenson) It is too early to provide a definitive assessment. The Renters Reform Act will not take effect until April 2026, and its impact will depend largely on how the supply of

Would you be content for the quarterly monitoring report on the Council's housing services to be submitted to the committee?	private rented accommodation changes—something that cannot yet be reliably forecast. It is also important to recognise that Tendring is distinct in having a relatively small private rented sector, with approximately 19% of households renting privately. As a result, any impact is likely to be more limited than in areas where 50–60% of residents are private renters. (Cllr. M Stephenson) This recommendation was included in the Task and Finish Group's final report; however, given the organisation's current capacity, producing a quarterly report would be too frequent.
Do you think the Strategy adequately covers safeguards to protect tenants from the actions of rogue landlords?	*The strategy is not intended to provide safeguards against rogue landlords. It is there to provide a high-level strategic overview of housing in Tendring.* *The Council has a good Private Sector Housing enforcement service that works alongside our homelessness services and as such can respond to situations where it is brought to our attention that tenants are being affected by landlords acting inappropriately.*
With the UK Government's stated intention to use fewer hotels to accommodate refugees, could these facilities present an opportunity to provide housing for the homeless?	*There are currently no such hotels within the Tendring District.* *The Council's focus is on providing temporary accommodation with self-contained facilities and shifting away from hotel and B&B use.*
Could you provide the latest figures on placements by other Councils into rental accommodation in Tendring and set out what issues such placements has and what your response to this is?	*During 2025 there were 70 placements that were notified to Council under s208 of the Housing Act 1996.* *Whilst Tendring does not place homeless households outside of the District unless there are exceptional circumstances it is common that other councils do so. 70 placements over the course of a year is not considered to be exceptional.* *LGR and the formation of unitary councils will create wider geographical areas over which a single unitary*

	authority can make placements, and it is not possible to prevent other councils from placing into Tendring currently. *Of course, those 70 placements will be into accommodation that a resident of Tendring might have been able to use.* *The only response is to monitor the situation and also be alert to the use of establishments that might be unsafe or unsuitable.*
In my original question, I requested the figures for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. Could you confirm whether the figures provided relate specifically to this timeframe?	Yes, the year is correct. A breakdown of the other local authorities that have placed households in Tendring is provided below: Barking & Dagenham – 2 Braintree – 1 Redbridge – 3 Thurrock – 1 Chelmsford – 12 Colchester – 51
In developing the Strategy, has any thought been given to the use of large commercial properties being repurposed as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)? In asking this question, I am aware of the Macari Foundations work in Stoke on Trent providing safe secure accommodation for the homeless there using such a repurposed commercial property with wooden pods inside for the residents	*Specifically in relation to the strategy this has not been thought about as it is providing an overall high-level approach to housing in Tendring.* *This is being looked at as part of the work of the Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Working Group. That said, the Council does have contacts with existing and emerging property owners / landlords who are interested in developing good quality accommodation in the District be that in commercial or existing residential buildings.*
How can we effectively address homelessness given that the situation is continuing to deteriorate?	(Councillor M Stephenson) We are approaching this challenge by focusing on two key elements: prevention and the management of homelessness itself. A significant part of our work is centred on prevention. We are delivering sufficient new homes to meet local need, and importantly, we do not have any families placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for temporary housing. One of the ongoing pressures relates to

	the size and availability of the private rented sector. To strengthen our preventative approach, we have appointed a Homelessness Prevention Officer who works directly with residents to address issues that may put them at risk of homelessness, with the primary aim of helping them remain in their existing home. There also remains a common misconception that joining the housing register guarantees an offer of a council home. Some of the prevention work includes continuing to work with partner agencies to ensure accurate information is shared and expectations are managed. Where necessary, the Council will provide temporary accommodation.

It was moved by Councillor Bush, seconded by Councillor Newton and **RESOLVED** that the Committee

(a) notes the final Housing Strategy 2026-30 and recommends it for adoption by Full Council on 27 January 2026.

32. REFERENCE FROM CABINET - A.3 - QUARTER 2 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2025/26

The Committee was presented with a reference report from Cabinet that set out a general update and overview of the Council's financial position against the 2025/26 budget and looking ahead to 2026/27 and beyond as part of the wider and ongoing development of the forecast and budget.

Members were reminded that on 14 November 2025, Cabinet had considered a Financial Performance Report, which had included a number of appendices (attached to the report A.4). Following its consideration, it had been resolved that Cabinet:

(a) notes the Council's in-year financial position at the end September 2025;

(b) approves the proposed adjustments to the 2025/26 budget, as set out in Appendix 1H and requests Officers to review the potential on-going impact in 2026/27 and beyond, where necessary, as part of developing forecast and detailed estimates for further consideration by Cabinet later in the year;

(c) agrees that the Council continues to be a member of the Essex Business Rates Pool and Council Tax Sharing Agreement with Essex County Council and the

other Major Preceptors in 2026/27, if it remains financially advantageous to do so;

(d) notes the updated context to the financial forecast from 2026/27, as set out in this report (A.2) and requests Officers, in consultation with Portfolio Holders, to further develop the financial forecast alongside the development of the Council's priorities; and

(e) formally invites the views of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the information set out in this report along with the Council's wider financial position, as part of its work programme for the year.

It was reported that as highlighted in (e) above, Cabinet had invited the views and comments of the Committee, including those associated with the wider process for developing the budget.

It was moved by Councillor Newton, seconded by Councillor Bensilum and **RESOLVED** that the Committee receives and notes the Quarter 2 Financial Performance Update Report and appendices and endorses its approval by Cabinet.

33. REFERENCE FROM THE CABINET - A.4 - EXECUTIVE'S INITIAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2026/27 (GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT)

Members were presented with a reference report from the Cabinet to set out the Executive's initial budget proposals for 2026/27 in respect of both the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for scrutiny by the Committee in accordance with the provisions of Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rule 3 of the Council's Constitution.

It was reported that reports relating to the Executive's initial GF and HRA Budget proposals for 2026/27 had been considered by Cabinet on 19 December 2025, with the comments of the Committee now requested as part of developing the Executive's final budget proposals for presenting to Full Council in February 2025.

The following had set out each report in turn:

1) Appendix A – Updated General Fund Financial Forecast / Budget 2026/27

At its meeting on 19 December 2025 (Minute 89 refers), Cabinet:-

*"**RESOLVED** that –*

a) the updated Financial Forecast and proposed budget position for 2025/26, as set out in item A.5 of the Report of the Corporate Finance & Governance Portfolio Holder and its appendices, be approved; and

b) the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments be requested on this latest financial forecast and proposed position for 2025/26."

2) <u>Appendix B – Updated Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Budget Proposals 2026/27</u>

At its meeting on 19 December 2025 (minute 91 refers), Cabinet:-

*"**RESOLVED** that –*

(a) the updated HRA 30-year Business Plan, which includes the proposed revised position for 2024/25 along with budget proposals for 2025/26, be approved; and

(b) the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments be requested on this latest HRA financial forecast."

The Chief Executive advised Members that the Council remained dissatisfied with the Fairer Funding settlement set out in Appendix A to the report (A.4). He explained that the allocation had not adequately reflected the significant deprivation challenges affecting the District. Accordingly, he would be writing to the relevant authorities to emphasise those concerns and to advocate for a more equitable funding position.

Questions by Members:	**Answers:**
Is it no longer necessary to retain the Climate Change Fund? Where do the Weeley receipts sit in the budget?	(Richard Barrett) Those monies were previously committed to the Climate Change Fund. They have since been refocused for other purposes, which has effectively depleted the fund; as a result, it no longer exists. The £2.153 million shown on page 130 — and on the right-hand side of the circulated diagram under 'Useable Capital Receipts' — includes the Weeley receipts.
Bearing in mind the Council's financial position in these last couple of years, is there potential to establish a 'Tendring Investment Fund' that can ring fence funding, as it becomes available, to support community renewal locally up to and beyond LGR?	*This is unlikely to be possible given the pressures on the limited funding available over the next couple of years and would need to be considered against competing priorities over the next two years.*
Could you provide further elaboration on the response given to the written question?	(Cllr. M Stephenson) We have just discussed the principle of consolidating all funding into a single pot; this proposal takes the opposite approach. We cannot allocate separate pots of money in different places and expect the new unitary authority to preserve them, as that is not how the system will operate. One of the challenges I have encountered, particularly in rural areas,

What would be the implications if we were to spend the money prior to LGR and develop proposals now?	is that residents are often hesitant to articulate what they want for their communities. In many cases, they look to me to provide the answer, but I do not live there and cannot determine their priorities for them. Our focus has been on aligning our priorities with those of the new unitary authority. This is not about spending as much as possible before transition. It is about ensuring that we leave the Council in the strongest and most responsible position at the point of handover, in the best interests of our residents. (Cllr. M Stephenson) As set out in the report, our priorities for the next two years have already been aligned. Throughout the LGR process, our guiding principle has been — and will remain — ensuring that Tendring is left in the strongest possible position for the benefit of our residents. (Ian Davidson) Once Section 24 of the Order is implemented, it will introduce restrictions on our spending. As we move into the shadow authority phase, additional limitations will apply, as expenditure will need to be approved through the appropriate board. If there are specific projects that Members wish to progress, we can consider those individually; however, retaining unallocated or unspecified funds is not a viable option. Some proposals are supported by government funding, which brings its own constraints. We have also been engaging with town and parish councils to explore different ways of working and to understand their priorities (Lisa Hastings) It would be unlawful to spend all of the remaining funds prior to the implementation of LGR. We are already under a duty to ensure that nothing we do undermines the success of the new authority, and formal

	guidance has been issued to that effect. Statutory Officers also have a separate legal obligation to prevent any such action. Within the next year, even stricter financial controls will apply, further limiting how funds may be used. It is therefore inappropriate to make statements in a public forum suggesting that the money should be spent before LGR takes place.
You are referencing a two year budget plan, can I just check whether it is legally permissible to adopt a two year budget.	*Although we are effectively proposing a two-year financial plan, the resulting annual budgets would still be subject to the necessary annual approval process in line with statutory obligations / requirements.*
What factors have contributed to the increase in costs recorded under 'Employees/Member Allowances'?	*Inflationary uplifts to reflect the estimated outcome from the annual pay settlement negotiations process.*
If and when we transition to LGR, regarding staff salaries and rising operational costs, how have new pressures affected staffing levels, and have we been able to maintain our workforce or experienced staff losses? To what extent is there a risk that the delivery of service contracts may be adversely affected?	(Ian Davidson) Currently we are not losing staff in terms of the pressures, but there is a risk of it. Staff may look to go elsewhere through concerns of the changes and their future. We hope not and we are reassuring staff and informing them of many opportunities that may arise because of the change. It does not impact on the budget directly, but inflationary costs contribute, particularly regarding contracts. Concern around staff is more around ensuring that the culture of TDC transfers to the new authority. The majority of our existing contracts clearly define the required service levels, with variations occurring only where a break clause is exercised or when a contract comes up for renewal.
Did the Council receive full reimbursement for the costs arising from the increase in National Insurance contributions last year? Is there also funding going forward for these costs under the 'new burdens' principle.	*As highlighted last year, the Council did not receive the full reimbursement of costs. The cost to the Council was £474k with the Government funding £208k.* *In terms of 2026/27, this funding is now rolled into the wider Revenue Support Grant.*
As the process progresses, will it be	(Richard Barrett) That funding is now

possible to clearly identify the level of funding allocated to us?	incorporated into the Revenue Support Grant.
Could you confirm the total financial cost of homelessness to the Council? To what extent does revenue budget fund this, one-off sums and specific government grants.	*The current budget position for 2025/26 is as follows:* *Net Expenditure - £4,079,320* *Government Grant – (£1,456,780)* *Total Net Cost met by TDC - £2,622,540* *Current proposals include further cost pressures of £500k in both 2026/27 and 2027/28.* *In terms of 2026/27, the impact from the Local Government Financial Settlement is currently subject to review but it will form part of the final budget proposals that will be presented to Full Council in February 2026. Additional net funding of approx. £500k per annum is expected to be available to support homelessness costs in 2026/27 and 2027/28 on top of the £500k cost pressure already highlighted above.*
In relation to the £1.9m identified within the savings plan, what is the shortfall against the Council's projected requirements?	*There is no shortfall as such as there is no absolute savings target within the forecast with the amounts identified to date forming just one element of a number of strands of work that underpin the preparation of the budget.* *However, the 'structural' deficits within the current forecast are £0.658m and £1.298m in 2026/27 and 2027/28 respectively.*
How is the Housing Revenue Account being used to ensure our housing stock meets both the sustainability commitments of the Council and the requirements of Decent Homes 2, and what role does the Regulator of Social Housing play in shaping our approach?	*The use of stock condition surveys and feed back from our tenants as part of the tenant satisfaction measure survey will provide us with information that will be used to focus where we spend the HRA.* *Decent Homes 2 has not yet been confirmed, however, this will place additional financial pressure onto the HRA.* *In relation to the Regulator of Social*

	Housing and the duty to comply with the consumer standards this will undoubtedly shape our approach to how and where we invested the housing stock.
What is the rationale for providing funding for PCSOs in Harwich specifically, and not extending similar support to other areas? Would it be possible for other Town/Parish Councils if they match the funding bids?	(Ian Davidson) This arrangement has been in place for many years and has consistently received Administration support. The rationale is that it forms part of a jointly funded initiative involving the PFCC, the Parish Council, and the District Council. (Cllr. M Stephenson) Harwich was selected on the basis of crime statistics, which at the time indicated significantly higher levels of criminal activity compared with other areas. Any extension of this approach elsewhere would require a clear evidence-based case. While overall crime levels in Tendring have fallen, Harwich continues to show the smallest reduction and therefore remains a priority.
Does reducing the housing stock — for example, by disposing of properties deemed beyond economic repair — limit our capacity to prevent and respond to homelessness?	(Ian Davidson) In many cases, the issue is not solely the condition of a building but its age. We have previously encountered properties that, due to their age, were no longer suitable as Council housing or capable of being maintained to the Decent Homes Standard. For example, in Harwich we held properties that were several hundred years old, which we considered for disposal. In such instances, we have sought to reinvest by purchasing former Council properties that had been sold under Right to Buy. These homes are typically located within our existing estates, are built to a reliable standard, and are more straightforward to maintain. This approach has generally worked well in terms of capital receipts. However, there have been occasional cases where a property was in such poor structural condition that it was not viable to bring it back up to the Decent Homes Standard.
You say you did not recognise the date	(Cllr. M Stephenson) At that stage, the

of 8 February 2024 and its relevance. This was the date quoted at a briefing for Councillors on the issue of Spendells and referred to in the report Outcome from the Spendells House Capital Scheme Review as when issues started to come to light. Having directed you to this date, I'm surprised you did not yourself seek assistance from the Chief Executive as to why it was that Cabinet Members did not know anything about the issues until early March.	Chief Executive was not in a position to provide full detail, as he was still in the process of gathering the necessary information. I did not press for updates prematurely, as I was confident that he would bring forward any relevant matters once the information was complete and sufficiently robust to share. This approach ensured that discussions were based on accurate, fully informed advice rather than partial or speculative updates.
In response to your State of Tendring address to Full Council on 19 March 2024, I asked "Spendells, we now hear it's overdue, but we don't know if it's over budget. Can you let us know?" This was over two weeks after the Portfolio Holder had been advised of issues with the project. You told Full Council, in response to my question about the Spendells budget, 'that is going on fine'. It wasn't, was it?	(Cllr. M Stephenson) With hindsight, it is clear that this was a conceptual matter, as I noted in the email exchange. When I addressed Full Council, I sought to respond to all questions openly and transparently, and I did so in the belief that the position was fully understood. It subsequently became apparent that this was not the case. I am satisfied with the explanation I provided in the email exchange, which is now in the public domain, and I have nothing further to add.
Could you provide the Committee with a comprehensive overview of the position regarding Spendells?	(Cllr. M Stephenson) Among the 130 families accommodated, the average length of stay is 66 days. No households are currently placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, resulting in an annual saving to the Council of approximately £300,000–£350,000.

The meeting was then temporarily adjourned, during which the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, Associate Director (Finance & IT) and Section 151 Officer, Associate Director (Operations & Delivery) and Assistant Director (Housing & Environment) departed.

Upon resumption of the meeting, it was moved by Councillor Newton, seconded by Councillor Bensilum and:-

RESOLVED that the Committee receives and notes the General Fund and HRA Budget Proposals 2026/27 report and appendices, and endorses their approval by Cabinet.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.44 pm

Chairman