**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL,
HELD ON TUESDAY, 31ST MARCH, 2026 AT 7.30 PM
IN THE PRINCES THEATRE, AT THE TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA, CO15 1SE**

Present:	Councillors Davidson (Chairman), Oxley (Vice-Chairman), Alexander, Amos, Barrett, Barry, Bensilum, Bray, Calver, Casey, Chapman BEM, A Cossens, M Cossens, Doyle, Everett, Fairley, Ferguson, Fowler, Griffiths, Guglielmi, Harris, I Henderson, J Henderson, P Honeywood, S Honeywood, Keteca, Kotz, Land, Morrison, Newton, Scott, Skeels Jnr., Smith, Steady, G Stephenson, M Stephenson, Sudra, Talbot, Thompson, White and Wiggins
In Attendance:	Ian Davidson (Chief Executive) (except item 125), Lisa Hastings (Corporate Director (Law & Governance) & Monitoring Officer) (except item 125), Richard Barrett (Corporate Director (Finance and IT) & Section 151 Officer) (except item 125), Katie Wilkins (Director (People)), Keith Simmons (Assistant Director (Corporate Policy & Support) & Deputy Monitoring Officer), Ian Ford (Democratic Services Manager) and Katie Koppenaal (Democratic Services Officer)
Also in Attendance:	Lee Heley (Corporate Director (Place and Wellbeing) & Deputy Chief Executive), William Lodge (Corporate Communications Manager), Kai Aberdeen (Theatre General Manager (Technical)), Bethany Jones (Democratic Services Officer), Christopher Bailey (Elections and Leadership Support Officer) and Simon Kedge (Casual Technician (Princes Theatre))

111. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Baker, Bush, Codling, Davis, Goldman, Placey and Platt.

112. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

It was moved by Councillor M E Stephenson, seconded by Councillor I J Henderson and:-

RESOLVED that the minutes of the budget and council tax setting meeting of the Council held on 17 February 2026 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

113. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members on this occasion.

114. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Members had had circulated to them a list of the Chairman of the Council’s civic events that he had attended on behalf of the Council since the end of January 2026.

The Chairman highlighted several of those events that he had found particularly enjoyable and inspiring namely:-

(1) Pride of Tendring Awards Evening – Thursday 26th February 2026;
(2) Saffron Schools Music Concert – Tuesday 3rd March 2026;
(3) The Sanctuary (Mental Health), Clacton-on-Sea – Wednesday 18th March 2026; and
(4) Essex County Council Reception for the enrolment of the new High Sheriff of Essex – Monday 30th March 2026.

115. <u>ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE</u>

The Chief Executive made the following announcements:-

<u>Local Government Reorganisation</u>

"Chairman, Councillors, last week Government announced its choice of configuration for local councils across the Greater Essex area; with the way ahead being five new unitary councils replacing the existing 15 local authorities.

As a reminder, this puts Tendring on a footprint with Colchester and Braintree, with the new North East Essex Council taking on the services and responsibilities of Essex County Council for the area too; and this was the preferred option of this council.

We will now step up our collaborative work with all partners across Greater Essex to deliver this change to best serve the interests of our communities, including the people of Tendring, and to ensure this process happens in a smooth way as possible with minimal disruption to the public.

We understand there will be lots of questions at this time, and we will be working hard to answer those over the coming weeks and months as the implementation plan is developed. I would remind Councillors that an All Members' Briefing will take place after this meeting.

We welcome the clarity from Government about future election arrangements; with confirmation there will be elections to the new unitary council in May 2027, with councillors elected for an initial five-year term to cover the transition process. This will replace scheduled elections to this authority, with your terms extended once the necessary legislation comes into place.

While there is a lot to do, we will continue to provide excellent local services for our residents and communities right up until the point at which Tendring District Council no longer exists on 1 April 2028; and we will work hard to maximise the opportunities re-organisation presents to provide better services to the public in the future and to put Tendring in the best possible place for the future."

<u>Katie Wilkins</u>

The Chief Executive announced with great pleasure that he would be amending Katie Wilkins' job title from that of Assistant Director (People) to Director (People). This change reflected and recognised Katie's role on Management Team and on the Essex LGR Working Group on HR and staffing matters.

The Chief Executive thanked Katie for her contributions.

Members congratulated Katie with a round of applause.

116. STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

There were no statements made by the Leader of the Council on this occasion.

117. STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

There were no statements made by members of the Cabinet on this occasion.

118. PETITIONS TO COUNCIL

On this occasion it was reported that no ‘live’ petitions had been submitted in accordance with the Scheme approved by the Council.

119. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.1

Subject to the required notice being given, members of the public could ask questions of the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holders or Chairmen of Committees.

It was reported that, on this occasion, no such questions on notice had been submitted.

120. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - A.1 - URGENT CABINET OR PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISIONS

Council considered a report of the Leader of the Council (A.1) that, in accordance with the requirements of Rule 16.2 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules and/or Rule 18(i) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and/or Rule 6(b) of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, notified Members of recent Executive Decision(s) taken in the circumstances set out in Rule 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules and/or Rule 18(i) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

(1) Engagement of resources from Local Government East to provide capacity within the Housing Repairs team in relation to the maintenance of Council Housing Stock

It was reported that, on 24 February 2026, and in view of the urgency of the issue concerned, and in accordance with Rule 18(i) of the Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Leader of the Council had sought and subsequently obtained the Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s consent, that his urgent decision, on behalf of the Cabinet, relating to authorising the use of up to £310,000 from the Housing Revenue Account Reserves, to fund the engagement of resources from Local Government East, to address an urgent need to provide capacity within the Housing Repairs team, to meet the Council’s statutory obligation in relation to the maintenance of Council Housing Stock, could be taken under the special urgency procedure and therefore be exempted from the call-in procedure.

The Leader’s urgent decision, on behalf of the Cabinet and using the special urgency powers, as provided within Schedule 3 (Responsibility for Executive Functions) and the Access to Information Procedure Rule 15 (Special Urgency), in consultation with the

Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning, and the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer had been as follows:

"To authorise the use of up to £310,000 from the Housing Revenue Account Reserves to fund the engagement of resources form Local Government East, to address an urgent need to provide capacity within the Housing Repairs team to meet the Council's statutory obligation in relation to the maintenance of Council Housing Stock."

It had been felt that any delay likely to be caused by the normal key decision process and/or the call-in process would have seriously prejudiced the Council's and the public's interest for the following reasons:-

"Due to the urgent need for the Council to enable there to be a management structure within the housing repairs service by entering into an agreement with LGE, for a period of up to six months, via the use of reserves within the HRA, by the 5th March 2026, the decision to use HRA reserves is proposed using special urgency powers, as set out in Part 3, Schedule 3 of the Constitution.

In addition, in order to meet the deadline to sign up the specialist resource, by 5th March 2026, permission will need to be granted by the Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to exempt this decision from both the Forward Plan and the 5-day call in period, through the special urgency provisions. This will be made through using Rule 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, as set out in Part 5.8 of the Constitution."

It was moved by Councillor M Stephenson and:-

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

121. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

It was moved by Councillor M E Stephenson, seconded by Councillor P B Honeywood and:-

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following Committees, as circulated, be received and noted:-

(a) Resources and Services Overview & Scrutiny of Wednesday 14 January 2026;

(b) Community Leadership Overview & Scrutiny of Thursday 15 January 2026;

(c) Planning Policy & Local Plan of Thursday 22 January 2026;

(d) Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Joint of Monday 26 January 2026;

(e) Community Leadership Overview & Scrutiny of Tuesday 10 February 2026;

(f) Audit of Thursday 19 February 2026;

(g) Human Resources & Council Tax of Monday 2 March 2026; and

(h) Resources and Services Overview & Scrutiny of Tuesday 10 March 2026.

122. MOTIONS TO COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

On this occasion it was reported that no motions on notice had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.

123. REFERENCE FROM THE CABINET - A.2 - ADOPTION OF THE ANNUAL CAPITAL AND TREASURY STRATEGY 2026-27

It was reported that, at its meeting held on 20 March 2026 (minute 127 referred), the Cabinet had considered a report of the report of the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder (A.9) which had sought Cabinet's agreement of the Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2026/27 (including Prudential and Treasury Indicators) for submission to this meeting of Full Council.

Cabinet had been reminded at their meeting that the Local Government Act 2003 and supporting regulations required the Council to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing, and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy (as required by Investment Guidance subsequent to that Act) that set out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments, "having regard" to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. Revised editions of both documents had come into force in 2023/24.

The Capital Strategy continued to be combined with the Treasury Strategy into one document, which was required to be updated / approved annually. The proposed Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2026/27 had been set out in Appendix A2 to the Portfolio Holder's report (A.9) and it had continued to reflect the various changes set out in the latest Codes mentioned above.

Members of the Cabinet had been informed that the Capital Strategy element of the combined document had covered the various elements surrounding capital investment decisions and the key criteria that investment decisions should be considered against.

The Treasury Strategy element of the combined document had covered the various elements that satisfied the requirements of the various codes that governed the borrowing and investment activities of the Council and had been prepared in the light of advice received from the Council's Treasury advisors and had reflected the latest codes and guidance.

Cabinet had been made aware that Prudential and Treasury indicators had been included as an Annexe to the combined strategy and had therefore been included within Appendix A2.

Members of the Cabinet had been advised that, under the Prudential Code, the Council had freedom over capital expenditure if it was prudent, affordable and sustainable. The Prudential Indicators either measured the expected activity or introduced limits upon the activity and reflected the underlying capital appraisal systems and enabled the Council to demonstrate that it was complying with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

Cabinet had been reassured that the Council's investments would be undertaken in accordance with its Treasury Management Practices (TMPs).

Cabinet had been informed that, following on from comments made last year, the Strategy now acknowledged potential obligations that would be placed on the Council due to the emerging legislation around Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Cabinet had, inter alia, "RESOLVED that the Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2026/27 (including Prudential and Treasury Indicators) be recommended to Full Council for its formal approval."

A copy of the published Corporate Finance & Governance Portfolio Holder's report (and its appendix) to the Cabinet meeting held on 20 March 2026 was attached to the reference report (A.2).

Having duly considered the reference report from Cabinet (A.2):-

It was moved by Councillor M Stephenson, seconded by Councillor I J Henderson and:-

RESOLVED that the annual Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2026/27 (including Prudential and Treasury Indicators), as set out in Appendix A to the reference report (A.2), be approved and formally adopted.

124. REPORTS SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL BY AN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

On this occasion it was reported that no reports had been submitted to the Council by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

125. REFERENCE FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES AND COUNCIL TAX COMMITTEE - A.3 - PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2026/27

The Chief Executive, the Corporate Director (Law and Governance) and the Corporate Director (Finance and IT) each declared an Interest and left the meeting whilst Council considered this matter and reached its decision thereon.

It was reported that, at its meeting held on 2 March 2026 (Minute 25 referred), the Human Resources & Council Tax Committee had considered a report of the Assistant Director of People (A.3), which had sought the Committee's endorsement of the draft Pay Policy Statement 2026/27.

The Committee had been reminded that Sections 38 and 39 of the Localism Act 2011 (Chapter 8 – Pay Accountability) required the Council to prepare and publish a Pay Policy Statement that set out the Council's approach to a range of matters relating to the pay of its workforce.

Members had been advised that Schedule 2 of Part 3 of the Constitution confirmed that Full Council was responsible for the preparation and approval of a Pay Policy Statement for the forthcoming financial year, in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. Officers had explained to the Human Resources & Council Tax Committee that they had historically overseen the preparation of the draft Statement and had recommended it to Full Council for approval and adoption.

Members had been also reminded that the statutory Pay Policy Statement must include the following matters:

- *The Council's policy on the level and elements of remuneration for each Chief Officer.*
- *The Council's policy on the remuneration of its lowest paid employees, including the definition of "lowest paid employees" and the reasons for adopting that definition.*
- *The Council's policy on the relationship between the remuneration of Chief Officers and other employees.*
- *The Council's policy on other aspects of Chief Officer remuneration, including remuneration on recruitment, increases and additions to remuneration, performance related pay, bonuses, termination payments and transparency.*

The Committee had noted that the draft Pay Policy Statement 2026/27 had incorporated a number of updates to ensure continued compliance, transparency and alignment with national frameworks. The main changes had reflected revised national pay arrangements, updated statutory reporting requirements and associated workforce policies. Those had included:

- *Implementation of the nationally agreed 2025/26 NJC pay award, including the removal of Spinal Column Point 2 from 1 April 2026, in line with changes to the national pay spine.*
- *Updated pay multiple calculations to reflect the revised lowest paid spinal point and the associated forecast pay multiple for 2026/27.*
- *Updated gender pay gap figures and narrative in accordance with the latest statutory reporting period.*
- *Confirmation of the Council's continued use of Essex County Council's Managed Service Solution framework for temporary staffing, supporting consistent and compliant off payroll engagement.*

The Committee had been further advised that, in the interests of transparency, all amendments had been shown in red within the draft Statement.

Officers had confirmed that the Committee was requested to review and provide comments on the draft Pay Policy Statement 2026/27 prior to its submission to Full Council.

The Committee had "RESOLVED that the draft Pay Policy Statement 2026/27, as set out in the Appendix to the Officer report (A.3), be recommended onto Full Council for its formal approval and adoption."

A copy of the published report of the Assistant Director – People (and its appendices) as presented to the Human Resources & Council Tax Committee at its meeting on 2 March 2026 was attached to the reference report (A.3).

Having reviewed the reference report from the Human Resources & Council Tax Committee (A.3):-

It was moved by Councillor Chapman BEM, seconded by Councillor Guglielmi and:-

RESOLVED that the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the reference report (A.3), be approved and formally adopted in accordance with the Authority's statutory obligations.

126. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE - A.4 - APPROVAL OF NON-ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Council considered a report of the Chief Executive which sought its approval of the reason for Councillor Anne Davis's non-attendance at meetings of the Council etc. for the period of six months commencing 30 October 2025 (if she did not attend such a meeting before 29 April 2026).

Council was informed that the last meeting, which Councillor Davis had attended, was that of the Licensing and Registration Committee held on 29 October 2025.

Members were aware that, if a Councillor did not attend any meeting of the Council (or any of its Committees or Sub-Committees) for a consecutive period of six months, Section 85 of Part V of the Local Government Act 1972 disqualified them unless the Full Council approved the reason for non-attendance before the end of that period.

It was reported that, on Thursday 19 February 2026, the Leader of the Reform UK Group (Councillor Jeff Bray) had handed to the Democratic Services Manager a letter dated 16 February 2026 and signed by Mr. Floyd Davis for, and on behalf of, Councillor Davis. A copy of that letter was appended to the Chief Executive's report. Members were cognisant that Councillor Davis was a member of the Reform UK Group.

In that letter Councillor Davis had informed the Council that she had suffered a major medical issue in November 2025 and that, since that time, Councillor Davis had remained in hospital undergoing treatment. Councillor Davis had stated that she was recovering well, albeit slowly, and believed it wholly possible that she would be fit and able to return to her Council duties in the not-too-distant-future.

Being mindful of the statutory limit for absence that applied to elected Councillors, Councillor Davis had respectfully requested Council to approve the reason for her non-attendance at meetings thereby removing the risk of disqualification from office and granting Councillor Davis a further period of grace.

If Council did so approve that request, Councillor Davis would need to attend a meeting of Council, or a Council Committee or Sub-Committee et cetera, before 29 October 2026 to remain a Councillor (or otherwise be subject to a fresh approval of absence by Council prior to that date).

It was moved by Councillor M E Stephenson, seconded by Councillor Bray and:-

RESOLVED that Councillor Davis's reason (namely health issues) for non-attendance at meetings of the Council etc. for the period of six months commencing 30 October 2025 (in the event of her not attending such a meeting before 29 April 2026) be approved.

127. REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (FINANCE & IT) - A.5 - INDEPENDENT PERSON RECRUITMENT (AUDIT COMMITTEE)

Council considered a report of the Corporate Director (Finance & IT) (A.5) which sought its approval of the recommendations from the Interview Selection Panel to appoint Mrs Sue Gallone as the Council's Independent Person to the Audit Committee for a term of two years. The recommended appointment was to be for the period expiring 31 March 2028.

It was recognised that Audit Committees were a fundamental pillar of good corporate governance of which the composition was a key factor in achieving the characteristics of a good Audit Committee.

Council was informed that the appointment of (an) Independent Person(s) to Audit Committees had initially stemmed from recommendations emerging from the Redmond Review, which had been a national independent review into oversight of local audit and the transparency of local authority financial reporting undertaken by Sir Tony Redmond. The outcome of that review had remained a cornerstone of various improvement plans and revised arrangements considered and introduced by the Government. In terms of the latest review, the Government had proposed to mandate audit committees within Local Authorities, including the provision for one independent member on those committees. Notwithstanding the above, CIPFA had issued their own guidance which stated:

"The audit committees of local authorities should include co-opted independent members in accordance with the appropriate legislation. Where there is no legislative direction to include co-opted independent members, CIPFA recommends that each authority audit committee should include at least two co-opted independent members to provide appropriate technical expertise".

It was believed that Audit Committee members needed an underlying independent, sceptical mindset and a willingness to provide robust challenge. The introduction of independent members was seen as beneficial to the Audit Committee in many ways, including:

- *ensuring a mix of skills and experience across a range of functions and activities;*
- *providing an external view can often bring a new approach to committee discussions;*
- *reinforce/support the political neutrality and independence of the Committee within the Council; and*
- *helps maintain continuity of committee membership where membership is affected by the electoral cycle.*

Overlaying the above with the CIPFA guidance mentioned previously, general aptitude also needed to be considered alongside relevant knowledge, skills and experience. The appointment needed to take account of the overall knowledge and expertise of the existing members of the Committee. Based on the most recent review the Council had looked for someone who could demonstrate a good understanding in the following areas:

- Financial stewardship/value for money; and
- Risk management/business continuity.

The Audit Committee had delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the Council in a number of areas as highlighted within its terms of reference – it was not proposed to provide the independent member with voting rights. This would remain subject to ongoing review to ensure that the arrangements remained appropriate and effective.

Members' Interview Selection Panel

Council was made aware that, on 5 February 2026, a Panel consisting of Councillors Sudra, Steady and Fairley, together with the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Corporate Governance, Performance and Procurement Manager, had interviewed a candidate who had been identified via an associated application process.

The Panel had asked the candidate several questions, evaluated the responses and upon scoring felt that the candidate would bring a high quality and particular range of skills and experience to the role. As a result of the interview conducted by the Interview Panel, as delegated by the Audit Committee, an appointment had been recommended to full Council.

It was moved by Councillor Sudra, seconded by Councillor M E Stephenson and:-

RESOLVED that –

a) the recommendation of the Audit Committee be endorsed and that an appointment be made to the role of Independent Person to the Audit Committee, for a two-year term until 31 March 2028, with an Independent Remuneration Panel Band C allowance per annum;

b) following the outcome of the Audit Committee's Interview Panel, Mrs Sue Gallone be formally appointed as the Council's Independent Person with immediate effect; and

c) it is noted that further decisions on the term of the Independent Person may be required, in the light of the Local Government Reorganisation programme.

128. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11.2

Subject to the required notice being given, Members of the Council could ask questions of the Chairman of the Council, the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holders or Chairmen of Committees.

It was reported that no questions on notice had been submitted by Members on this occasion.

129. URGENT MATTERS FOR DEBATE

No urgent matters had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 3(xv), 11.3(b) and/or 13(p) for this meeting.

The Meeting was declared closed at 7.52 pm

Chairman