

Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/26



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Opening

This Joint Report provides an account of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny activity during 2025/26, bringing together the full breadth of work undertaken by the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees over the year.

Across the reporting period, both Committees delivered a structured programme of formal meetings designed to examine major strategic issues and test the effectiveness of key areas of Council policy. Alongside this, Members led a series of Task and Finish Groups, enabling more focused, in-depth enquiries to progress between committee meetings. This combination of formal oversight and targeted investigation ensured that scrutiny remained active, evidence-based, and capable of responding to emerging priorities. The Council's established scrutiny framework continues to be regarded highly by the Chairmen and Members of both Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Its emphasis on member leadership, constructive challenge, and systematic enquiry is consistently recognised as a strength, contributing to a culture of robust and transparent decision-making.

Throughout the year, Members have shown sustained commitment to the scrutiny process, dedicating significant time and expertise to the enquiries undertaken. Their engagement has been central to maintaining the quality and credibility of scrutiny across the organisation.

Chair's Quotes



“Another busy year has unfolded, shaped significantly by the advent of Local Government Reorganisation. This has drawn the Committee into new areas of work while also reinforcing the value of our proven and trusted approaches. Our core format of regular meetings with invited guests has been strengthened by a wider range of engagement opportunities, including informal sessions, all-member briefings, and targeted training. Together, these have enabled us to take deeper, more informed dives into the issues brought before the Committee.

Over the past year, the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee has delivered a robust and far-reaching programme of work. We continue to oversee the development and implementation of the new Essex Integrated Care Board, maintaining open communication to ensure the residents of Tendring are well served. We have also completed a comprehensive review of Community Governance arrangements for Clacton-on-Sea, Holland-on-Sea and Jaywick Sands, providing clear recommendations for the future of local representation.

Looking ahead, Local Government Reorganisation remains a significant development. As this progresses, we will continue to explore opportunities for joint working with colleagues on the Braintree and Colchester Scrutiny Committees to support shared learning and consistent oversight across Northeast Essex.

I extend my sincere thanks to our Council Officers for their timely reports, professionalism and expertise, and to every Committee Member for their thoughtful engagement and constructive challenge. Together, we are strengthening partnerships and raising aspirations for improved public services across our District.”

Councillor Graham Steady

Chairman of the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

“2025/26 has been a year in which the Resources & Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has taken an increasingly proactive and outward-looking approach to its work. Members have been determined to focus their efforts where scrutiny can make the greatest difference, and this has shaped the Committee’s agenda throughout the year.

A central area of attention has been the implementation of the Waste and Street Cleaning contract. As the largest contract currently held by Tendring District Council, and one representing a substantial investment of public funds, it was essential that the Committee examined its delivery with care and rigour. This scrutiny has been vital not only because of the scale of the contract, but because of its direct impact on the quality of the local environment and the everyday experience of residents. Our work has sought to ensure that the contract is delivering on its commitments, providing value for money, and meeting the standards our communities rightly expect.

Alongside this, the Committee has continued to engage with wider strategic issues affecting the Council’s services, financial resilience, and future planning. Members have remained committed to constructive challenge, transparency, and evidence-led decision-making, recognising the importance of these principles at a time when public resources must be used with ever-greater care. As we look ahead, the Committee will continue to adopt a proactive stance, directing its scrutiny to those areas where it can provide assurance, support improvement, and safeguard the effective use of public funds for the benefit of all residents.”



Councillor Paul Honeywood

Chairman of the Resources & Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Line Up

During 2025/26, the memberships of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committees were revised. As this Annual Report covers the majority of 2024/25 and the commencement of 2025/26, the composition of each Committee for both years is detailed herein. The lineups shown do not identify any in year changes that took place and reflect the current Membership of the Committees at the time of publication.

Resources & Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26

Councillor Paul Honeywood – Chairman
Councillor Chris Amos – Vice Chairman
Councillor Matthew Bensilum
Councillor Mike Bush
Councillor Dan Casey
Councillor Bernard Goldman
Councillor Jo Henderson
Councillor Sarah Newton
Councillor Graham Steady

Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26 – Current

Councillor Graham Steady – Chairman
Councillor Terrence Barrett – Vice Chairman
Councillor Chris Amos
Councillor Bill Davidson
Councillor Carolyn Doyle
Councillor Tanya Ferguson
Councillor Chris Griffiths
Councillor Peter Harris
Councillor Ann Oxley

2026/27 Enquiry Task and Finish Group Memberships:

Joint working with Parish and Town Councils

Councillor Graham Steady – Chairman
Councillor Dan Casey
Councillor Chapman
Councillor Mark Cossens
Councillor Tanya Ferguson

Youth Mental Health

Councillor Terry Barrett – Chairman
Councillor Dan Casey
Councillor Bill Davidson
Councillor Carolyn Doyle
Councillor Ann Oxley

Assets Management

Councillor Matthew Bensilum
Councillor Mike Bush
Councillor Sarah Newton
Councillor Graham Steady

Council's Enforcement Arrangements

Councillor Dan Casey
Councillor Bernard Goldman
Councillor Paul Honeywood
Councillor Graham Steady

Overview of 2025/26

What follows is a concise overview of the 2025/26 Work Programme, as approved by Council and later by the Committees. The full scope endorsed by Council on 14 August 2025 can be found on the Council's website.

Community Leadership OSC

Completed:

- Community Governance Review progress
- Carnarvon Terrace Progress/Implementation
- Crime and Disorder (Familial Violence/Abuse)
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2025-28
- Youth Provision of School Age Children specifically mental health outside of educational settings
- Coastal Communities Unit
- Grant Funding by the Council and others

Commenced in 2025/26 and proposed to be carried forward to 2026/27:

- Joint working with Parish & Town Councils
- Explore joint working opportunities with Braintree and Colchester Scrutiny Panels/Committees
- Water Quality Enquiry

Resources & Services OSC

Completed:

- Pre-budget scrutiny
- Overview of the Financial Outturn 2024/25
- Housing Strategy Development and Infrastructure and Temporary Accommodation
- Capital treasury strategy 2026/27
- Quarter 2 2025/26 Financial Performance Update
- Waste and street cleaning contract

Commenced in 2025/26 and proposed to be carried forward to 2026/27:

- Asset management arrangements
- Council enforcement arrangements
- Explore joint working opportunities with Braintree and Colchester Scrutiny Panels/Committees

Summary of accepted recommendations:-

- Community Governance Review at the meeting of Full Council held on 2 June 2026
- Housing Strategy Development and Infrastructure and Temporary Accommodation, in relation to the endorsement of the Housing Strategy, adopted by Full Council at its meeting on 27 January 2026
- Pre-Budget Scrutiny, in relation to the Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy, adopted by Full Council at its meeting on 31 March 2026



Spotlight (CLOSC)

Spotlight on The Community Governance Review

The Community Governance Review for Clacton, Holland and Jaywick has been undertaken as a key component of the wider Local Government Reorganisation process. This reorganisation represents a significant, once-in-a-generation opportunity to examine how local democratic arrangements can best serve residents now and in the future. Throughout the review, the scrutiny committee has focused on ensuring that the voices of local people are central to the process, safeguarding their democratic rights and enabling them to influence the shape of any future governance structures.

A core aim of the committee's work has been to ensure that, whatever the eventual outcome of the Local Government Reorganisation, the distinct identities, heritage and priorities of Clacton, Holland and Jaywick are fully recognised and protected. The review has therefore considered not only the practical implications of potential governance changes, but also the importance of maintaining strong community representation and preserving the unique character of each area.

Following detailed analysis, public engagement and the committee's own scrutiny, a set of recommendations was formulated and subsequently presented to Full Council. These recommendations were formally adopted at the meeting held on 2 June 2026, marking a significant milestone in the review process and providing a clear framework for the next stages of decision-making.

Primary School Activity Focus

The Committee intends to carry out a programme of site visits to primary schools across Tendring, followed by a dedicated meeting to review the insights gathered and to consider whether establishing a Task and Finish Group would enable a deeper examination of the issues.

This forthcoming work will investigate how schools are currently utilising the School Sports Premium, assess the impact of the UK Government's recent realignment of this funding stream, and explore opportunities for more collaborative approaches that could strengthen future bids for school-based physical activity initiatives.

This inquiry is significant to the committee as the School Sports Premium represents a key investment in children's health, wellbeing, and long-term life chances. Understanding how effectively it is being used—and how schools are adapting to changes in national policy—will help ensure that resources are targeted where they can make the greatest difference. It also provides an opportunity to identify good practice, highlight barriers, and support schools in developing sustainable, high-quality provision that benefits all pupils.

Engagement with primary school leaders, the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, and the Corporate Director (Place & Wellbeing) will be central to this work. Their perspectives will help the Committee build a rounded picture of local needs and opportunities, directly supporting the Cabinet priorities to raise aspirations, expand opportunities for young people, foster local pride, and enhance quality of life through strong and effective partnership working.



Still to come





Spotlight (RSOSC)

Spotlight on the Council's Waste and Street Cleaning Contract

The Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has played a central role in shining a clear and constructive light on Tendring District Council's Waste and Street Cleaning Contract. By taking this issue forward, the committee has helped bring transparency to a high-profile service that affects every resident, every day, and has ensured that performance, value for money, and contract management are subject to robust public scrutiny.

Through its work, the committee has examined how effectively the contract is being delivered, the quality and consistency of street cleansing, the responsiveness of the service to local issues, and the Council's oversight arrangements. Members have highlighted both the strengths of the current system and the areas where improvements are needed—particularly around monitoring, communication, and ensuring that contractual standards are met across all parts of the district. This scrutiny has helped surface operational challenges, identify gaps in service delivery, and reinforce the importance of clear performance data and accountability.

The committee's enquiry has also provided a platform to explore wider strategic issues, including how the contract supports the Council's ambitions for cleaner neighbourhoods, environmental sustainability, and pride in place. By engaging with officers, reviewing evidence, and drawing on the lived experience of residents, members have helped ensure that the service continues to evolve in line with community expectations and emerging national requirements.

As a direct outcome of this work, the committee has agreed to establish a Portfolio Holder Working Party on Waste and Street Cleaning. This group will undertake a deeper, more focused review of the contract, its performance, and future options.

Through this proactive and member-driven scrutiny, the committee has ensured that waste and street cleaning remains a priority area for improvement, transparency, and accountability—helping to deliver cleaner, better-maintained communities across Tendring.

Temporary Accommodation – Standards and Meeting the Need

This enquiry—brought to the committee as a direct result of a member-initiated request—has allowed the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to shine a clear light on how the Council provides and manages temporary accommodation for households in need. By taking this issue forward, members have helped highlight both the progress made in improving standards and the significant pressures that continue to shape this area of work, from rising homelessness to the financial strain of providing suitable accommodation.



Still to
come

Through the enquiry, the committee, so far, has examined the systems that sit behind each placement: the safety inspections, planning checks, fire risk assessments, and ongoing monitoring that ensure every property used is lawful, safe, and appropriate. The work has also brought visibility to the improvements achieved in recent years—such as ending the use of B&Bs for families—while acknowledging the challenges ahead, including the need to procure temporary accommodation under the Procurement Act 2023.

Importantly, as a result of this member-driven enquiry, the committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group on Temporary Accommodation, made up of the full membership of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This group will take forward a deeper, more focused review of the issues raised and will hold an enquiry day in July 2026 to gather evidence, hear from officers and partners, and relevant individuals to develop recommendations for future improvement.



Statement from the Leader of the Council

“I have consistently championed rigorous scrutiny as the bedrock of good governance, and that conviction remains unchanged. As we conclude the 2025/26 year, the role of our Overview and Scrutiny Committees is more vital than ever. Their work as the Cabinet’s ‘critical friend’ is essential for holding decision makers to account, safeguarding public trust, and ensuring that every major policy withstands close examination.

I pay tribute to the unwavering dedication of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members. Their careful questioning, evidence gathering, and willingness to challenge assumptions strengthen transparency and dispel any perception of complacency. Their efforts ensure that Cabinet decisions are tested against the highest standards and genuinely serve our residents.

Two major areas of scrutiny have defined this year. First, the Community Governance Review—a rare opportunity to examine how local democracy is structured across our towns and parishes. The Committee’s work has been crucial in ensuring that proposed changes reflect community identity, aspirations, and practical needs, with scrutiny helping to guarantee fair, transparent, and well-informed recommendations.

Second, the Waste and Recycling Contract, one of our most significant and high-impact services. As we prepare for a new contract cycle, the Committee’s examination of performance, value for money, environmental outcomes, and service reliability has been vital. Their scrutiny will help secure a modern, resilient, and resident-focused service for the years ahead.

I am proud of the culture of accountability we continue to build. When challenges arise—as they inevitably do in public service—our response must be rooted in openness, learning, and collective responsibility. Scrutiny embodies that principle, turning challenges into opportunities for improvement and ensuring our governance remains transparent, resilient, and worthy of public trust.”

Councillor Mark Stephenson – Leader of the Council

Councillor Mark Stephenson

Leader of the Council

INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRIES IN 2026/27?
Contact: democraticservices@tendringdc.gov.uk



Developing the 2026/27 Work Programme

An open invitation was issued to invite proposals for inclusion in the 2026/27 Work Programme. Members of the public, along with a range of stakeholders, were encouraged to put forward suggestions for consideration. These submissions were subsequently reviewed and prioritised through a series of informal meetings involving Committee Members. The agreed priorities were then formally endorsed at specially convened meetings of the two Committees.

Following this process, detailed enquiry specifications were developed for each agreed topic and were presented to Full Council for consideration on 1 September 2026.

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