

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL
HELD ON**

27 February 2025

7.00 - 9.43 pm

PRESENT

COUNCILLORS

Andrew Johnson (Chair)
Sue Livings (Vice-Chair)

Danielle Brown	Maggie Hulcoop
David Carter	Mark Ingall
Joel Charles	James Leppard
Linda Clark	Kay Morrison
Jodi Dunne	Stefan Mullard-Toal
Tony Durcan	Aiden O'Dell
Tony Edwards	Russell Perrin
Hannah Ellis	Daniella Pritchard
Michael Garnett	Nicky Purse
Emma Ghaffari	Matthew Saggars
James Griggs	Lanie Shears
Alastair Gunn	Jake Shepherd
Michael Hardware	Clive Souter
Michael Houlihan	Dan Swords

OFFICERS

Niel Churchill,
Communications Manager
Rebecca Farrant, Assistant
Director - Corporate Services
and Improvement
James Gardner, Managing
Director
Paul Keen, Communications
Officer
Adam Rees, Senior
Governance Support Officer
Jacqui Van Mellaerts,
Assistant Director - Finance

Also Present

Ben Standing, Browne- Jacobson

89. **WEBCAST INTRODUCTION**

The Chair said the meeting was being webcast live and would be available for repeated viewing after the meeting has ended. By continuing to attend the meeting, you were consenting to being filmed and to appearing in the webcast.

90. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Luke Howard, Stacy Seales, and Nancy Watson.

91. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Michael Hardware declared a pecuniary interest in Item 10e as the Deputy Cabinet member for Economic Development at Essex County Council. He would leave the meeting whilst the item was considered.

92. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2024 and 30 January 2025 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

93. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

None.

94. **PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

95. **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

96. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

97. **MOTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

98. **REFERENCES FROM CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

The Chair asked Full Council to take items 10a-c and 11a of the agenda together and this was agreed. As required by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 all votes on these agenda items were recorded. Details of these are appended to the minutes.

- a) Referral from Cabinet - Medium Term Financial Plan and General Fund Budget 2025/26

Full Council received a referral from Cabinet on the Medium Term Financial Plan and General Fund Budget 2025/26.

Councillor Stefan Mullard-Toal (seconded by Councillor James Griggs) moved an amendment as set out in supplementary agenda 1.

A recorded vote was taken on the amendment and the amendment was lost.

During debate, the duration of the meeting reached two hours. Under Council Procedure Rule 9.1, Full Council agreed that the meeting would continue until all remaining business was considered.

Councillor Dan Swords (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) proposed that a vote was taken on the substantive motion. As required by law a recorded vote was taken and it was:

RESOLVED that Full Council:

- A** Noted the balanced 2025-26 General Fund budget and balanced 2025-28 MTFP which will fully fund all corporate missions and pressures whilst ensuring greater efficiency and value for money for Harlow taxpayers and improved service provision and do so whilst freezing Harlow council tax and fees and charges across the lifetime of the MTFP.
- B** Approved the Medium Term Financial Plan 2025 - 2028, and the General Fund Budget for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- C** Approved that the council's band D council tax for 2025/26 is set at £288.90 representing a 0% increase as set out Appendix A to the report.
- D** Approved the General Fund estimates for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- E** Approved the proposed transfers between the General Fund and service specific earmarked reserves, referred to within the report and as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- F** Approved proposed Fees and Charges, as set out in Appendix B to the report.
- G** Approved proposed Pay Policy Statement, as set out in Appendix C to the report.

- b) Referral from Cabinet - Housing Revenue Account Budget 2025/26 and Business Plan

Full Council received a referral from Cabinet on the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2025/26 and Business Plan.

Proposed by Councillor Dan Swords (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

RESOLVED that Full Council noted:

- A** Noted the balanced HRA budget proposals for 2025/26 which include a sustainable 30-year HRA Business Plan, increased investment to meet fully the requirements of the regulatory landscape and improve service provision, and

significant investment to deliver the council's corporate mission to Transform Harlow's Housing.

- B** Approved the HRA estimates as set out in Appendix A to the report.
 - C** Approved that tenant rents are increased by 2.7 percent with effect from 1 April 2025. This equates to an average weekly rent of £115.23 an increase of £3.03 as set out in paragraph 13 to 16 of the report.
 - D** Approved that the rents and personal charges for temporary accommodation are increased with effect from 1 April 2025 as set out in paragraph 17 to 19 of the report.
 - E** Approved that garage rents within the 'Retain and Invest' category and related charges are increased by 5 percent with effect from 1 April 2025 as set out in paragraph 20 to 23 of the report. This equates to an average weekly rent of £13.62, an increase of £0.65.
 - F** Approved that tenant service charges are increased to recover full cost with effect from 1 April 2025 as set out in paragraphs 24 to 28 of the report and Appendix C to the report.
 - G** Approved that the leasehold service charges are increased with effect from 1 April 2025 to ensure that all leaseholder costs are recovered as set out in paragraphs 29 to 33 of the report and Appendix C of the report.
 - H** Approved that all other tenant charges are increased with effect from 1 April 2025 in order to recover cost as set out in Appendix C of the report.
 - I** Approved the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2024-54, as set out in Appendix B to the report.
- c) Referral from Cabinet - Capital Budget and Treasury Report 2025/26

Full Council received a referral from Cabinet on the Capital Budget and Treasury Report 2025/26.

Proposed by Councillor Dan Swords (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

RESOLVED that Full Council:

- A** Noted both capital programmes which fully fund all six corporate missions and represent the largest capital programmes the council has ever undertaken.
- B** Approved the 2025/26 Housing Capital Programme (HCP) totalling £39.672 million as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- C** Approved the 2025/26 Non-Housing Capital Programme totalling £75.236 million as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- D** Approved the following Capital and Treasury Reports:
 - i) The Capital Strategy Report 2025/26 as set out in Appendix B to the report;
 - ii) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26 as set out in Appendix C to the report;
 - iii) The Investment Strategy Report 2025/26 as set out in Appendix D to the report;
 - iv) The Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2025/26 as set out in Appendix E to the report; and
 - v) The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in Appendix F to the report.

- d) Referral from Cabinet - Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 - Mid-Year Review

Full Council received a referral from Cabinet on the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 Mid-Year Review.

Proposed by Councillor Dan Swords (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

RESOLVED that the Mid-Year Review of the Treasury Management Strategy, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted.

Councillor Michael Hardware left the meeting.

- e) Referral from Cabinet - Update on the Use of Compulsory Purchase Powers and Harlow Council Land to advance the development of the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town

Full Council received a referral from Cabinet on the use of Compulsory Purchase Powers to advance the development of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

Proposed by Councillor Dan Swords (seconded by Councillor Alastair Gunn) it was:

RESOLVED that Full Council:

- A** Approved (subject to satisfactory negotiations with PfP) the disposal of Harlow Council's freehold interest in the subject land required to deliver the Stort River Crossing Schemes, those schemes being:
- i) The Central Stort Crossing proposal which comprises, in broad terms, alterations to the existing Fifth Avenue road/rail bridge, and creation of new bridges to support the widened highway to the west of the existing structure to create the Central Stort Crossings, including embankment works, pedestrian and cycle facilities, a pedestrian and cycle bridge over Eastwick Road, lighting and landscaping works and other associated works (East Herts Council planning reference: 3/19/1046/FUL & Harlow Council planning reference: HW/CRB/19/00220); and
 - ii) The Eastern Stort Crossing which comprises, in broad terms, erection of a new road, pedestrian and cycle bridge; replacement of an existing rail bridge at River Way; alterations to the existing local highway network; lighting and landscaping works; listed building works to Fiddlers Brook Bridge; and other associated works (East Herts Council planning reference: 3/19/1051/FUL and Harlow Council planning reference: HW/CRB/19/00221).

Such land disposal to be via private treaty to PfP and to include all necessary land currently within the ownership of Harlow Council; and any land acquired by Harlow Council as part of the land assembly for the Stort River Crossing Schemes.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Recommendation above involves the resolutions made by Full Council on 29 October 2020 detailed in Council Minute 36. remaining extant, except for the Resolution recorded in Minute 36. a) ii) that *"Full Council, in principle, where Harlow District Council is landowner, or through the process of acquisition (including under CPO) would become landowner, the Council agreed to retain ownership but grant licence for*

infrastructure works on that land...". However, that resolution recorded in Minute 36. a) ii) shall remain extant if Officers are unable to negotiate satisfactory terms with PfP for the freehold transfer of the subject land.

- B** Delegated to the Managing Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance the authority to negotiate and finalise the terms of the freehold land disposals and (subject to being satisfied that it would be for the best consideration reasonably obtainable and on terms that comply with the Council's statutory and common law duties) thereafter procure the legal completion of the sale documentation.

Councillor Michael Hardware returned to the meeting.

99. **REPORTS FROM OFFICERS**

- a) Council Tax Resolution 2025/26

Full Council received a report on the Council Tax Resolution 2025/26.

As set out in Minute 98, a recorded vote was taken on this item and details of the vote are appended to the minutes.

Proposed by Councillor Dan Swords (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

RESOLVED that the Council Tax Resolution for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

100. **MINUTES OF CABINET AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings be noted.

- a) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 3 December 2024 of Scrutiny Committee
- b) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 4 December 2024 of Development Management Committee
- c) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 10 December 2024 of Cabinet
- d) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 11 December 2024 of Audit & Standards Committee
- e) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 4 February 2025 of Scrutiny Committee

- f) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 12 February 2025 of Development Management Committee
- g) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 13 February 2025 of Cabinet

101. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

102. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that the following item be taken in private session on the grounds that it is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as specified under Paragraph 3 of Part One of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, if and so long as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

103. **REFERRAL FROM CABINET - TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY**

Full Council received a referral from Cabinet on the Town Centre Strategy.

Proposed by Councillor Dan Swords (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

RESOLVED that Full Council:

- A** Delegated authority be given to the Leader of the Council, Managing Director and Section 151 Officer to finalise the purchase of the development sites as detailed in the report.
- B** Delegated authority be given to the Leader of the Council and Managing Director to take all necessary steps to commence the redevelopment of the sites, including demolition, as detailed within the budget profile set-out within this report and in accordance with council's procurement framework.
- C** A maximum budget is allocated for the negotiated purchase price and associated costs per the agreed terms of this report and approve that associated Capital Strategy and Treasury documents are amended to reflect the capital acquisition as detailed in the report.

- D** Delegated authority be given to the Leader of the Council and Section 151 officer to finalise any required capital financing for the acquisitions as detailed in the report.
- E** Delegated authority be given to the Leader of the Council, Section 151 officer and Managing Director to negotiate and complete the acquisition as detailed in the report.

CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

Full Council – 27 February 2025

Questions from the Public

1 Steve Barnes to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I note that on 8 January 2025 at an Extraordinary meeting of Uttlesford DC (UDC), councillors voted to accept a comprehensive report on the subject of devolution. I also note that on 21 January Councillors at Epping Forest DC (EFDC) attended an all party briefing session on the same subject.

Can you advise me if Councillors in Harlow have discussed this matter collectively and if the Council has a formal view on the proposal to scrap Harlow District Council (HDC), bearing in mind there has been no consultation with residents about these changes which are likely to occur as soon as 2027?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Harlow Council has been fully engaged with these considerations, but Mr Barnes questions are a little premature. There is, at present, no proposal to consult on in respect of Local Government Regorganisation – that is being worked on and will be debated by Harlow Council in March ahead of the required update to Government, before any Essex-wide submission in the autumn. My sole interest is about doing what is right for Harlow and its people.

Supplementary question from Steve Barnes:

Are you working that Essex County Council have already begun consultation along with the Government?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Yes, but that is on devolution and not local government re-organisation.

2 Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

You will no doubt be aware that within the EFDC area there are four Town Councils and twenty Parish Councils and within the UDC there are two Town Councils and fifty-one Parish Councils all of which are statutory consultees in respect of planning applications. I note that at a recent meeting of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town committee a commitment was made to consult

Parish Councils in the EFDC area. It is interesting to note that EFDC unlike in Harlow, do not publish comments made in respect of planning applications by individuals.

Bearing the above in mind, with the proposal to create new Unitary Authorities, will the residents of Harlow be afforded the same rights as residents in other parts of the new District, by the creation of a Harlow Town Council and indeed follow up the proposals made by the Conservative Party locally in the 1990's to create Parish Councils across the town?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

These are details which are simply far too premature to consider, but I can assure Mr Taylor that they will be. Ultimately, all such decisions are for the Government. My sole interest is about doing what is right for Harlow and its people.

3 Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

The developments to the south and west of Harlow will greatly affect residents in Harlow. Bearing in mind that we live in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and the total lack of consultation that has taken place to date by either EDC or HDC, will this council make any effort and if so how, to involve residents in the town and encourage them to comment on these developments. so that residents here will be afforded the same opportunity to comment as those living in Parishes within the EFDC District?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Officers and members from Epping and Harlow Councils collaborate to ensure effective engagement in delivering and developing the Garden Community sites. This involves determining methods of engagement, identifying the stakeholders, and setting guidelines for developer engagement.

There has been extensive consultation to date on Latton Priory located to the south of the district, this being the most advanced site out of the south and west Garden Communities. Consultations are noted as:

Developer Led Masterplan

- Autumn/Winter 2019 Public Consultation
- Winter 2023 public consultation

EFDC Led Design Code

- Autumn/Winter 2023 public consultation

Planning Application

- Autumn/Winter 2023 Public Consultation
- 5,697 letters sent to address points in Harlow, Four site notices put up by EFDC, Six site notices within Harlow (Radburn Close, Spruce Hill, Sibneys Green, Rundells, Outside BBQ Flames, Access at Fern Hill Lane)

The Council will keep residents and the public informed of any further consultation.

The Water Lane Garden Community is not as advanced, but to help shape the future development of this site, the developer is formulating a stakeholder engagement. The engagement plan ensures that ward members, resident groups and/or associations and businesses can inform the masterplanning process at its earliest conception. This will ensure there is effective and ongoing engagement with a series of events and milestones set out along the way. The Water Lane developers are to start engaging with the local community spring/ summer 2025.

Supplementary question from Nicholas Taylor:

Can you ensure that residents are included in these consultations?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Yes.

4 Jennifer Steadman to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Following on from Harlow Council receiving a truly appalling C3 rating by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH), Dan Swords attended a meeting with the RSH on January 8th of this year.

The report quoted that a "C3" fire safety regulation rating for council properties indicates "serious failings" in meeting fire safety standards, requiring significant improvements from the council to address issues identified by the RSH; essentially meaning the council has not adequately addressed fire safety concerns within their properties and needs to take immediate action to rectify them.

It also states over 500 overdue high risk remedial actions and 1,500 overdue medium risk actions of which 1,000 have been overdue for longer than 12months.

Is it now safe to presume that as it is nigh on five months since the C3 report that Harlow council properties have now all been risk assessed for fire safety, or are undergoing assessments and you will be announcing shortly that Harlow is now in receipt of the highest RSH rating?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

The Council continues to meet monthly with the Regulator for Social Housing and remains on track to have completed all Fire Risk Assessments by 31st March 2025. The Council's performance has improved significantly in recent months with 82% of stock now having been surveyed. A dedicated team of officers review performance against the completion of Fire Risk Assessments and tasks/actions weekly, this includes performance against overdue actions and reports monthly into the Regulator for Social Housing.

It is important to note that a number of overdue actions relate to major works and to support delivery of these works a substantial capital works programme is currently in progress, with further £9m programmed in and due to be delivered in 25/26. In addition to the above and to support the work being undertaken by the Housing team, two new Housing Officer posts dedicated to Fire Safety Work were approved by Cabinet last week.

We are fully funding every commitment we have made to the Regulator and will take every action required to meet those commitments.

Supplementary question from Jennifer Steadman:

Are the results of the C3 report available for public viewing for those without access to the internet, and have affected residents been informed of their property failings?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I can't confirm the accessibility of Government documents, but if any tenant was concerned I'd be more than happy to make the report available to them. As part of annual report, we wrote to every person in the town detailing the action we are taking.

5 Jennifer Steadman to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):

One of Old Harlow's pensioners who resides in a purpose-built bungalow brought to my attention a rather worrying fire safety matter concerning escape route access.

The row of bungalows in question have no back door fire escape access so, if there were to be a fire at the front of their property, unless they are an Olympic hurdle jumper or trained mountain climber, they won't be able to escape to safety out of their kitchen or bedroom window which are both at the back of the property.

Identical bungalows in Old Harlow had retrofitted back door fire escapes in their bedroom just a couple of years ago.

So why haven't the residents of these bungalows been offered a retrofit fire escape door in their bedroom? Did the budget run out or are the lives of these pensioner residents not important enough to spend money on?

Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):

The council has requested that a fire risk assessor carries out inspections of the bungalows in question. The council will review the recommendations.

Supplementary question from Jennifer Steadman:

Legislation says that bungalows should have two exits for safety. Would you be happy for a relative to live in one of the bungalows?

Supplementary reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):

These properties were built under previous legislation. They are being assessed as set out in my previous answer.

Full Council – 27 February 2025

Questions from Councillors

1 Councillor Mark Ingall to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

There is clearly disagreement between Councillor Swords and I on the matter of the previous Conservative Party internal investigation into Islamophobic posts made by James Leppard. I contend that the material provided in the Council meeting of November the 7th was new additional material and therefore warranted further investigation. Councillor Swords in his answers to me on 12th of December said that the Conservative Party investigation had included this additional material. To shed light on this and provide clarity will Councillor Swords please make the report, that he must have seen in order to make his comments, available for all Councillors to read?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

No.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mark Ingall:

Why the secrecy around the report?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

This discussion has been well worn and the accusations subject to an independent review. We live in a democracy and Councillor Leppard was returned following the accusations.

2 Councillor Lanie Shears to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

When Councillor Leppard was reinstated following his suspension for racist and Islamophobic comments made on social media, it was stated that he would undergo equality and diversity training. Will the Leader of the Council please confirm that Councillor Leppard completed this training along with the details of the training provided and the name of the provider of that training?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Yes, he has.

Supplementary question from Councillor Lanie Shears:

Will he give me the name of the training provider?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I have nothing further to add.

3 Councillor Jodi Dunne to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Harlow homes for Harlow people is a noble aim, however, does the slogan have any legal basis?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Thank you for reminding me that the Harlow Labour group opposed the reforms we made last year to the council's Housing Allocations Policy which prioritised Harlow homes for Harlow families and not for London Councils as had been the case when they ran the council.

The Localism Act 2011 gives us the legal powers to determine how Harlow homes are allocated and who qualifies for them. It is on that legal basis that we introduced Harlow homes for Harlow people, and on their foolish ideology that the Harlow Labour group opposed that change.

Supplementary question from Councillor Jodi Dunne:

Does he agree with me that if the policy existed in 1947, Harlow would have a lot of empty homes?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

This isn't a new mantra and it was put to the electorate.

4 Councillor Jodi Dunne to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Harlow Homes for Harlow People has been the mantra of the administration since the purchase of Burnt Mills Tower.

Would you please explain why it has taken almost a year to hand keys to the first residents and confirm what instructions the letting agents have been given to ensure that all 172 properties are let only to Harlow people?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Thank you for the question on the remarkable action this council took when faced with the prospect of this brand-new 172-apartment development falling into the hands of Newham Council for temporary accommodation of Newham families. We acted at extreme pace to stop this, and I recall the criticism I received at the time from him and his group for not moving faster.

Since buying the development, the council has been working through the requirements to occupy the building, including the completion of construction work and registration with the Building Safety Regulator. During this time, the council has not lost any money against the long-term financing as the requirements do not commence until occupation.

The development has been advertised for market rent with fantastic interest and is imminently to be advertised to those on the council's Housing Needs Register with units now being let.

All 172-apartments are available for Harlow people with clear instructions to our operating agent to prevent any such property being let to another council or the like.

I am proud of our record in standing up for our town and ensuring Harlow homes for Harlow people. I only wish they had done the same to prevent so many London authorities dumping their residents here in the many years that they ran the council.

Supplementary question from Councillor Jodi Dunne:

Is he aware that welcome packs have been sent to London boroughs?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

We have not sent out welcome packs.

5 Councillor Alastair Gunn to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

On 12 February, Harlow College took part in Mathematics Education Innovation's Further Education Maths Challenge, helping its students develop

the skills and confidence in maths they will need to excel in their exams and future careers.

The winners and runners up will now be representing Harlow at the regional stage of the competition, which will be held at Harlow College next month.

As well as joining me in wishing them luck, can the Leader set out what Harlow Council is doing to support Harlow College in developing the STEM skills our town and its next generation will need to grow, especially on green skills as we transform Harlow's housing, rebuild our town and respond to the climate crisis?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

We are on a mission to secure investment for Harlow's future to grow our local economy, give Harlow residents the skills they need and create high-wage high-skilled jobs for the future.

To that end, we work closely with Harlow College to support the development of STEM skills locally. Some of the activity that has taken place over the past couple of years include:

- a) Provided £0.5m funding (via the Towns Fund) to support the delivery of Harlow College's Institute of Technology which has provided inspiring facilities to support the delivery of engineering, health and social care and science skills on the college campus.
- b) Worked in partnership with the college and local employers to deliver a "Let's build a satellite" enrichment programme that has supported students studying STEM subjects to run a project developing practical engineering skills.
- c) Through Section 106 employment and skills planning conditions linked local developers with Harlow College to provide work experience opportunities for students studying construction related courses as well as deliver careers activities.
- d) Through year 3 of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) provided funding to enable Harlow College to offer bursaries to adults that would otherwise had to self-fund training courses. The bursaries were taken up by local residents to study a range of courses including several STEM and green skill related courses, such as Electric vehicle maintenance, electrical installation, accountancy and nursing courses.
- e) It is proposed that Year 4 UKSPF funding will be used to support Harlow College to relocate and reopen its Construction Hub and as a result

deliver a range of skills required by local developers and construction companies to support them to deliver the housing and regeneration schemes across the town.

- f) The Economic Development team have attended several careers events at Harlow College, where they have highlighted the importance of STEM skills in order to access the high value jobs available locally.

We will continue to do all we can to secure investment for Harlow's future, giving our young people the skills they need to access high-wage high-skilled jobs, and I wish every one of them the very best of luck as they move forward to the regional competition.

Supplementary question from Councillor Alastair Gunn:

Does the Leader share my concern with the Government cutting funding which enables some of things he has listed?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I do share his concern. The Government has also decided to cut the Shared Prosperity Fund.

6 Councillor James Griggs to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):

Does the Portfolio Holder for Housing recommend that residents in flat blocks follow the advice offered in their fire evacuation plans?

Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):

Fire Safety Plans for individual high-risk blocks are developed in line with the Fire Risk Assessments and where required in consultation with Essex Fire and Rescue Service. For the remainder of flat blocks Fire Risk Assessments undertaken on the block will determine an evacuation plan. All residents should follow such plans.

Supplementary question from Councillor James Griggs:

In light of this, would he agree with me that making jokes about Grenfell is inappropriate?

Supplementary reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):

I can't comment as this is subject to legal proceedings.

7 Councillor James Griggs to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I have been contacted by a number of residents of all ages from 14 - 82 regarding their safety concerns in relation to the temporary bus station. They feel that the lighting is inadequate and creates shadowy areas which make them feel unsafe.

Will you agree to urgently undertake a review of the lighting not only at the bus station itself but also around the heras fencing maze that passengers are required to navigate to gain access to and from Broadwalk and Market Square?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

A survey of the temporary facility was undertaken by our external lighting contractors and covered both the journey from Market Square to Post Office Road, and the temporary bus station.

The council has already installed comprehensive lighting and CCTV across the site and undercroft of Market House, improving the provision from what was previously provided when in operation as a car park.

However, there has been issues in completing the lighting plan due to Essex County Council's road works at Post Office Road, which affected the electrical infrastructure. I am pleased to report that Essex County Council have now completed the works allowing the council to install further lighting as planned.

I can also report that the council has recently engaged the support of accessibility and inclusion consultants, who as part of their role in reviewing our town centre schemes, will be undertaking a review of the journey and spaces whilst we deliver our once in a generation programme of town centre regeneration.

Supplementary question from Councillor James Griggs:

When was the survey taken, can I have a copy, and can I be notified when works are completed?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I will provide this in writing to you.

Name	Labour Amendment (Items 10a-c and 11a)	Substantive Motion - Budget (Items 10a- c and 11a)
Danielle Brown	Against	For
David Carter	Against	For
Joel Charles	Against	For
Linda Clark	For	Abstain
Jodi Dunne	For	Abstain
Tony Durcan	For	Abstain
Tony Edwards	For	Abstain
Hannah Ellis	Against	For
Mike Garnett	Against	For
Dr. Emma Ghaffari	Against	For
James Griggs	For	Abstain
Alastair Gunn	Against	For
Michael Hardware	Against	For
Michael Houlihan	For	Abstain
Maggie Hulcoop	For	Abstain
Mark Ingall	For	Abstain
Andrew Johnson	Against	For
James Leppard	Against	For
Sue Livings	Against	For
Kay Morrison	For	Abstain
Stefan Mullard-Toal	For	Abstain
Aiden O'Dell	For	Abstain
Russell Perrin	Against	For
Daniella Pritchard	For	Abstain
Nicky Purse	Against	For
Matthew Saggars	Against	For
Lanie Shears	For	Abstain
Jake Shepherd	For	Abstain
Clive Souter	Against	For
Dan Swords	Against	For
Result	14 For 16 Against 0 Abstentions Rejected	16 For 0 Against 14 Abstentions Carried