

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL  
HELD ON**

27 March 2025

7.50 - 8.20 pm

**PRESENT**

**COUNCILLORS**

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

Danielle Brown	Michael Houlihan
David Carter	Luke Howard
Joel Charles	James Leppard
Linda Clark	Kay Morrison
Jodi Dunne	Stefan Mullard-Toal
Tony Durcan	Daniella Pritchard
Tony Edwards	Nicky Purse
Hannah Ellis	Matthew Saggars
Michael Garnett	Lanie Shears
Emma Ghaffari	Jake Shepherd
James Griggs	Clive Souter
Alastair Gunn	Dan Swords
Michael Hardware	Nancy Watson

**OFFICERS**

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

104. **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.

105. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Ingall, Maggie Hulcoop and Russell Perrin.

106. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

107. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2025 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the amendment of Councillor Hardware's title at Essex County Council to be Deputy Cabinet member for the Arts, Heritage and Culture.

108. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair noted that Aiden O'Dell had resigned as a Councillor. The Chair thanked Aiden for his service.

The Chair offered his condolences to the friends and family of Tom Farr, who served as a Councillors from the 1960's, through to 1990. He was Chair of the council in 1975 and was the longest serving Leader in the council's history. Councillor Tony Durcan paid tribute to Tom.

The Chair reminded Councillors that due to the by-election, the council was now in the pre-election period. He reminded Councillors of the restrictions in place at this time.

Lastly, the Chair thanked all the staff and acts involved in making Celebrate Harlow a success.

109. **PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

110. **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

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

111. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

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

112. **MOTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

a) Audiovisual Recordings of Meetings

Proposed by Councillor James Griggs (seconded by Councillor Jodi Dunne)

"This council recognises the value of accurately and appropriately recording its publicly accessible meetings. Administrative support and minute taking provides an essential service. It is recognised that the approved minutes of a meeting are its legal record, but minutes cannot be expected to accurately record every detail of a meeting in the same way that modern recording technology can.

This Council already makes audiovisual recordings of its main, publicly accessible meetings which it webcasts and makes available on its website for future reference. This Council now commits to making audiovisual recordings of all of its publicly accessible meetings, where reasonably practicable, although it acknowledges

that it will not be possible to webcast all of the publicly accessible meetings that it records.

Recognising that there are matters of operational logistics to resolve in order to move to a position of recording as many of its publicly accessible meetings as is reasonably practicable, this Council asks the Managing Director to take the necessary steps to implement a policy of recording as many of the Council's publicly accessible meetings as is reasonably practicable, and that he does so in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition."

**RESOLVED** that the above motion be carried.

113. **APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER**

*Daniel Dickinson left the meeting for the consideration of the item.*

Full Council received a report on the appointment of a Monitoring Officer.

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

**RESOLVED** that:

**A** In line with the requirements under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended), Mr Daniel Dickinson be designated as the council's Monitoring Officer with effect from 28 March 2025 until 6 July 2025.

**B** In line with the requirements under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended), Ms Farida Hussain be designated as the council's Monitoring Officer with effect from 7 July 2025.

**C** Council noted that the Monitoring Officer will also be the council's Data Protection Officer in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.

*Daniel Dickinson returned to the meeting.*

114. **CONTRACT STANDING ORDER - UPDATE**

Full Council received a report on updated contract standing orders.

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

**RESOLVED** that Full Council approved the updated Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) as set out in Appendix A to the report, for inclusion in the constitution, and delegated to the Monitoring Officer,

in consultation with the Leader of the Council, authority to make any necessary minor or consequential amendments to constitution or CSOs to ensure the proper and effective integration/operation of the same.

115. **REFERENCES FROM CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

- a) Referral from Licensing Committee - Driver Training – Hackney Carriage and Private Hire

Full Council received a referral from the Licensing Committee on hackney carriage and private hire driver training.

Proposed by Councillor Clive Souter (seconded by Councillor James Griggs) it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

- A** The proposals in paragraphs 22-31 of the report for driver training standards and procedures be adopted, subject to the following amendments:

- i) Licensed drivers would be required to attend refresher training every two years, instead of every three years;
- ii) The provision to allow drivers to submit proof of completing an equal or higher-level course provided by another licensing authority in lieu of a course offered by Harlow Council be removed.

- B** The driver training for licensees and applicants is outsourced to qualified training providers as proposed in paragraphs 32-36 of the report, subject to The Chair of the Licensing Committee, and the relevant Assistant Director, approving the specification of any training prior to award of contract.

- b) Referral from Cabinet - Harlow Quarter - Acquisition / Compulsory Purchase Order

Full Council received a referral from Cabinet on the acquisition of, or use of a Compulsory Purchase Order, for the site known as Harlow Quarter.

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

**RESOLVED** that Full Council:

- A** Delegated authority to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, to finalise proposals for the purchase of Harlow Quarter by private treaty.
- B** Delegated authority to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to, in parallel with negotiations to acquire by private treaty, finalise proposals to acquire Harlow Quarter using compulsory purchase powers.
- C** Allocated the maximum budget set out in confidential Appendix B to the report, to fund the acquisition of Harlow Quarter including all costs associated with the acquisition and/or compulsory purchase process, and delegate authority to the S151 Officer to amend the Council's Capital Strategy and Treasury documents accordingly.
- D** Noted that final authority to proceed with an acquisition by private treaty (pursuant to A above) or to exercise compulsory purchase powers (pursuant to B above) will be subject to a future Cabinet decision.

116. **ANNUAL REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Full Council received the annual reports from Councillors appointed to outside bodies.

**RESOLVED** that the reports be noted.

117. **APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

**RESOLVED** that the appointments be approved as appended to the minutes.

118. **REPORTS FROM OFFICERS**

None.

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

- a) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 4 March 2025 of Scrutiny Committee

- b) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 11 March 2025 of Licensing Committee
- c) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 12 March 2025 of Development Management Committee

120. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

# **Full Council – 27 March 2025**

## **Questions from the Public**

### **1 Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Everyone agrees that the change to governance in Essex is the biggest since 1974. Clearly the present government want to see changes being made before the next General Election.

In the summary section of Grant Thornton, Institute for Governance report dated March 2025 it states “Local leaders must ensure the public can share and inform decisions on their future governance. This should involve consultation with a wide range of communities and stakeholders through mechanisms such as focus groups and citizen assemblies”.

I am not aware that any such consultation has taken place in the county, but councils are forging ahead, with a final submission just a few weeks away.

Would you agree with me that there are far more urgent matters which need to be addressed by councils, many of which are close to bankruptcy and social care and homelessness services are in crisis and that none of these issues will be resolved by trying to make changes based solely on geographical boundaries and arbitrary population figures?

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

Thank you for your question. Unfortunately, this is a question for the Government as I have explained previously. This council is focused on ensuring the best outcome for Harlow through such a process. However, we are not allowing such conversations to distract from the delivery of our missions and the things that residents care most about.

### **Supplementary question from Nicholas Taylor:**

Am I not right in saying that whilst the government invited councils to submit a case, like other councils Essex did not have to do this at this time?

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

That is a question for Essex County Council, Southend and Thurrock. It wasn't our decision to go onto the devolution priority programme.

# **Full Council – 27 March 2025**

## **Questions from Councillors**

**1 Councillor Kay Morrison to Councillor Danielle Brown (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):**

Cost of living challenges continue to affect lives in our country. Necessities are sometimes unaffordable: amongst those for many, shockingly, are female hygiene products. One in 4 women cannot afford them, sometimes resorting to toilet paper and other surprising solutions.

State-maintained schools and 16-19 education settings in England can access free period products funded by the Department of Education. Yet, a third of teenage girls miss school because of periods according to a recent survey; of those, more than 1 in 10 said they have no access to sanitary products and 11% said they can't afford them. They're not alone.

Morrison's will provide a couple of sanitary pads in an emergency. Harlow's Playhouse makes such products available and foodbanks supply them. Some local authorities offer free period products and, recognising that the very subject is still potentially embarrassing, meet the need discreetly, confidentially.

How does Harlow Council support women and girls struggling to buy essential sanitary products and what further measures will be introduced?

**Reply from Councillor Danielle Brown (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):**

The council does not provide sanitary products to women and girls. The council supports the Harlow Foodbank who provide sanitary products, and Harvey Centre who have been working to tackle period poverty since 2021.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Kay Morrison:**

How satisfied are you with the current approach?

**Supplementary reply from Councillor Danielle Brown (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):**

I am satisfied, but am happy to look at the approach again.



**2 Councillor James Griggs to Councillor Danielle Brown (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):**

Way back last summer I spoke with officers and suggested the relocation of the canopies and table tennis tables from the market square.

At a meeting of the 'Friends of the Town Park' the group told me they were keen to have the table tennis tables relocated to the park and I'm pleased that this has now been done.

At the same time, I suggested to officers the use of the canopies to provide some shade at the splash parks and paddling pools. Can you give an update on the canopies and the plans for their use?

**Reply from Councillor Danielle Brown (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):**

Work has already begun to get the paddling pools and splash parks ready for the 2025 season. This includes assessing health and safety, as well as the need for shade, so we can determine the most suitable locations for the canopies which will be installed before the season commences.

We're looking forward to welcoming both returning and new visitors to the paddling pools and splash parks this summer as we continue to invest in these much-loved facilities as part of our mission to deliver high-performing council services.

In line with our increased investment, we are looking at how we can improve the provision further, and we will have an exciting announcement soon. We aim to ensure everyone enjoys the pools whilst staying comfortable in the shade. Let's hope we have a beautifully long sunny summer!

**3 Councillor James Griggs to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability):**

Over a year ago ECCO announced that its tenure at Parndon Wood Nature Reserve would come to an end on 12th May 2024.

In a statement issued on 1st March last year the Portfolio holder for environment said:

"We are working to secure a new community partner to operate the service and that work will be stepped up in the coming weeks"

Why, over a year later, is the process of finding a new partner moving at such a glacial pace?

**Reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability):**

I fully appreciate your concerns regarding the pace of progress in securing a new community partner for Parndon Wood Nature Reserve. While this process has taken longer than initially anticipated, it is important that we get it right to ensure the site's long-term sustainability and value to the community.

Work to secure a new partner has been ongoing behind the scenes, and I'm pleased to say there is now light at the end of the tunnel. We have received six expressions of interest so far, and all interested parties have been given the opportunity to visit the site in preparation. Tender packs are due to be issued within the next two weeks, with applicants given three to four weeks to return their submissions. Once received, the tenders will be evaluated, with a view to appointing a successful applicant in time to benefit from the important summer season.

This is not simply a matter of handing over the keys — we are looking for a partner who can not only manage the site but also deliver environmental education, community engagement, and stewardship of this valued natural asset. That level of responsibility requires a careful, thorough approach.

In the meantime, I'd like to reassure residents that Parndon Wood has remained open during its normal hours, with the site being staffed by Council personnel to ensure continued public access and safety.

We remain committed to delivering a strong future for the Reserve and appreciate the community's continued patience as we complete the final stages of this process.

**Supplementary question from Councillor James Griggs:**

Are you able to set a target date?

**Supplementary reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability):**

I don't want to have a set timeline now as it is more important that we get this right.

**4 Councillor Jake Shepherd to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

I've been supporting Bishopsfield residents in tackling ongoing repairs, estate maintenance and environmental health matters for several months. Matters are made more complex due to the mixed responsibility between Harlow Council's and/or L&Q's (Housing Association), in differing areas with several grey areas. Residents and I are concerned about a breakdown in communication between those responsible for managing the neighbourhood and find the longstanding delays in resolving issues frustrating.

Will the Portfolio Holder join me and my fellow Ward Councillors in walking around the Bishopsfield neighbourhood to see these issues firsthand and meet with residents affected?

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

Yes, I, along with Housing Officers, am happy to meet with ward councillors and this is currently being arranged.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Jake Shepherd:**

Residents received a sharp letter from the council. Are you happy with the comments?

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

I haven't seen the letter, but if you send me the letter I can comment on it.

**5 Councillor Jake Shepherd to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability):**

It's been a notable amount of time (09/12/24) since residents were last updated by the Council on plans for a new Community Orchard at Cannons Gate allotment. The Portfolio Holder stated in December that stakeholders were being engaged in the coming weeks.

How many stakeholders have been engaged about these proposals, and subsequently what was the level of interest from stakeholders to get involved with this scheme?

**Reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability):**

Since December, we have been actively engaging with a broad range of stakeholders to develop plans for the new Community Orchard at Cannons

Gate allotment. This has included local allotment holders, schools, community groups, volunteers, and environmental organisations.

As part of the project, schools will be invited to take part in a competition to design a feature that reflects Harlow's heritage through art. The winning design will be brought to life and commissioned through local artists, adding a unique and creative focal point to the orchard.

We are now in the final stages of the orchard's design and are proud to confirm that it will be dedicated to the late Bill Weston, in recognition of his deep commitment to the local community and the environment.

Further updates on the launch and opportunities for wider community involvement will be shared in the coming weeks.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Jake Shepherd:**

Will keep me updated?

**Supplementary reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability):**

Yes, I will keep you updated.

Changes are in bold

## Council Representatives on Outside Bodies 2024/25

Outside Body	Appointments
Active Harlow Partnership	Danielle Brown
Age Concern	Maggie Hulcoop
Citizens Advice Bureau	James Griggs
District Councils' Network	Dan Swords
East of England Local Government Association	Dan Swords
Essex County Council's Essex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Danielle Brown
Essex Police and Crime Panel	Mike Garnett
Fawbert & Barnard Educational Foundation	Sue Livings Joel Charles Tom Newens
Great Parndon Community Association Board	Tony Durcan
Harlow Art Trust	Sue Livings
Harlow Homelessness Prevention Partnership	Maggie Hulcoop
Harlow Occupational Health Service	Tony Edwards
Harlow Recreation Trust Fund – Advisory Panel	Jake Shepherd (if vacancy arises)
Harlow-Stansted Gateway Transportation Board	Alastair Gunn
Housing Welfare Panel	David Carter <b>Linda Clark</b> Sue Livings <b>Stacy Seales</b> Danielle Brown <b>Michael Houlihan</b> <b>Maggie Hulcoop</b> Matthew Saggars <del><b>Tony Durcan</b></del> Tony Edwards James Griggs <b>Mark Ingall</b>

	Kay Morrison
Local Government Association General Assembly	Dan Swords
Local Government Association District Council's Network Assembly	Dan Swords
PATROL Adjudication Joint Committee	Tony Durcan
Safer Harlow Partnership	Joel Charles
St Johns Arts & Recreation Association	Sue Livings
Stansted Airport Consultative Committee	Alastair Gunn
Veolia Partnership Board	Nicky Purse
Waste Member Partnership Board and IAA Member Working Group	Nicky Purse
Young Concern Trust	Mark Ingall