

Cllr Neil Hargreaves, Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy

Report to Full Council – 14 October 2025

Audits


The audit of the accounts for the year to March 25 started in September. Weekly meetings are held and KPMG have not raised any issues so far

The KPMG Value for Money Risk Assessment audit for y/e 2025 is complete and was published for the Audit and Standards committee. The areas covered are Financial sustainability, Governance, and Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. For all three they report 'No significant risks identified', and have not raised any recommendations, or performance improvement observations. The full report is in the A&S agenda papers.

Financial forecasts

The forecast for the financial outcome for this year 25/26 is that the general fund is on target to meet the budget, actually better than budget by £50k, although a forecast from just one quarter for the whole year must be taken with caution. The prediction for the HRA is an overspend of £310k mostly due to void properties awaiting refurbishment or redevelopment. The details are published in the 9th October Cabinet papers.

North Essex Economic Board

Members may be interested in the latest NEEB newsletter [The latest news and support for businesses in North Essex!](#) 

And also to download the app, the link for which is on the newsletter. It covers NEEB's activities: Free networking events, Co-working spaces, Job opportunities, Webinars, Making new business connections, and business promotion

Support of local pubs

May I encourage members to share the Rural England Prosperity Fund grant opportunities, with pubs in their wards. As part of the REPF we have £250,000 available to help pubs across the district adapt, grow and thrive. They can apply for grants up to £25,000 and can access free consultations to support business development, digital skills and community engagement.

So far, 11 pubs have received a combined £77,000 – but £173,000 remains unclaimed. 'The funding is split into four strands: visitor economy grants, which helps pubs create new offers for customers; energy efficiency grants, which cut bills and carbon emissions; community development grants, which support pubs' social role in villages; digital skills grants, which offers training and website support.'

Here is a BBC article on this [Uttlesford council urges rural pubs to apply to £250,000 fund - BBC News](#)

And a podcast with interviews with pub tenants [Economic Development on BBC Sounds 24 September](#)

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