

COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2025 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor C Criscione (Chair)
Councillors M Ahmed, H Asker, S Barker, N Church, A Coote, J Davey, B Donald, G Driscoll, J Emanuel, J Evans, C Fiddy, R Freeman, R Gooding, N Hargreaves, R Haynes, P Lees, M Lemon, S Luck, J Moran, E Oliver, R Pavitt, A Reeve, N Reeve, G Sell, R Silcock, M Sutton and M Tayler

Officers in attendance: A Knight (Chief Operating Officer), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager) and N Katevu (Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

C35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and began by thanking the departing Monitoring Officer for her service to the Council in the past two years.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong, Bagnall, Coletta, Dean, Foley, Gregory, Loughlin, Loveday, Martin, McBirnie and Regan.

There were no declarations of interest.

C36 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 22 July, 21 August, and 23 September 2025 were approved as correct records.

C37 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman provided an update on his civic engagements since the previous meeting, including the following events:

- Attending the Mayor of Thurrock's afternoon tea
- Visiting the Essex County Council chairman's reception
- Presenting the Jack Petchey Foundation Awards
- Attending the High Sheriff's Justice Service
- Appointing the first Chairman's cadet for Uttlesford, which would be the Chairman's chosen charity for the year. He said it was important to raise the profile of such a valuable youth organisation.

C38 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Leader of the Council presented her report to Council and thanked the departing Monitoring Officer, Nurainatta Katevu, praising her work and engagement with staff and councillors. She wished her all the best in her new role at South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), she highlighted that the Council's recent extraordinary meeting was well-conducted and she praised members for the debate and officers for their analysis and reporting. Going forward, she would restart leadership meetings with opposition members alongside the Chief Executive and was considering monthly member briefings for all members regarding LGR matters. She also asked members to advocate for Uttlesford, share accurate information with residents and support staff through the process, and referenced a recent ECC leaflet about LGR that seemed to lack details about the Council's decision. In March 2026, Government would announce the LGR model to be adopted across Essex and preparations would begin for vesting day of the new organisation.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell, the Leader said she was pleased that 8 MPs has supported the 5 Unitary model submitted to Government, which was the Business Case endorsed by the Council.

C39 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS (UP TO 30 MINUTES)

In response to a clarification question from Councillor Barker regarding whether the Gas, "Rates or Council Tax" cost figures cited in his response for Alexia House and Parkside were correct, Councillor Coote confirmed that they were.

In response to a question from Councillor Luck regarding a sewage treatment plant in Debden Drive, Councillor Evans said there was a pending condition on the plant's approval and that an Environmental Health Officer had recommended not lifting the condition. Furthermore, he said that the property owner was responsible for proper plant operation and further work was being undertaken to improve the situation. He said he was happy to collaborate with Councillor Luck in order to address residents' concerns about the sewage treatment plant.

C40 MATTERS RECEIVED ABOUT JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

There were no matters received about joint arrangements and external organisations.

C41 MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

The Chairman said that items 8 to 11 had been recommended to full Council for approval by the Audit and Standards Committee.

C42

CODE OF PRACTICE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY STATUTORY OFFICERS

Councillor Fiddy, Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee, presented the report regarding the Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers. She explained that the document was a model code prepared by key local government organisations including lawyers, LLG, SOLACE, and CIPFA. The code aimed to:

- Establish a foundation for effective local governance
- Ensure transparency, accountability, and sound decision-making
- Focus on key statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer, and Monitoring Officer)
- Align the council with nationally recognised standards
- Reinforce commitment to integrity, leadership, and transparency
- Enhance working relationships between statutory officers, especially during organisational stress

She proposed approval of the recommendation set-out in the report.

Councillor Donald seconded the proposal.

The vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED to adopt the Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers attached at Appendix 1.

C43

BRIBERY ACT POLICY

Councillor Fiddy presented the report regarding an update to the Bribery Act Policy. She highlighted the tracked change in paragraph 9.1, referencing the Procurement Act of 2023, and said the purpose was to keep the Council in line with current legislation. She proposed adoption of the updated Bribery Act Policy and to note the report.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Donald.

Councillor Barker raised an issue regarding typographical and grammatical errors and asked for these to be corrected. The Chairman agreed that the relevant officer would address these issues.

The vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that:

- i. The content of the report be noted.
- ii. That Full Council adopts the updated Bribery Act Policy in Appendix A

C44 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) ANNUAL REVIEW

Councillor Fiddy presented the RIPA policy update, noting that the Council had not used RIPA powers since 2014 and continued to submit annual nil returns to the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO). She emphasised that the Council would maintain a policy of using covert surveillance powers only when absolutely necessary. She added that the last IPCO inspection was in July 2018 and a full inspection was scheduled for 2027. She asked members to note the report and proposed approval of the policy.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Coote.

The vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- i. That the content of the report be noted.
- ii. That full Council adopts the updated RIPA Policy in Appendix A.

C45 FINANCIAL RULES & REGULATIONS

Councillor Fiddy presented the report regarding Financial Rules and Regulations. She said the report had been produced in response to a financial management review by CIPFA from the previous autumn. She noted that the approval limits were more conservative compared to previous regulations, which helped ensure effective governance and democratic decision-making. She proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report.

Councillor Hargreaves seconded the proposal. He said that CIPFA had given the Council a "clean bill of health" and that the main changes included clarifying arrangements for write-offs and payment procedures. He highlighted the table detailing updated authorisation levels.

Councillor Sell requested an updated organisational chart to clarify senior officer responsibilities.

The vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the updated Financial Rules and Regulations at Appendix A be approved.

C46 APPOINTMENT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND MONITORING OFFICER

The Leader presented the report regarding the Appointment of Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer, which recommended the appointment of Carolyn Forster on a temporary basis until 31 May, pending the announcement by Government on the successful LGR business case. She commended the candidate's

experience, job history and achievements and proposed approval of the recommendation set-out in the report.

Councillor Freeman seconded the proposal and said the candidate had provided excellent legal counsel at Planning Committee meetings, which he Co-Chaired. He commended the candidate to full Council.

In response to question from Councillors Barker and Driscoll on process, the Monitoring Officer said an appointment panel was not convened as it was an interim appointment until May 2026. However, as the role was a statutory officer position, full Council's agreement was necessary to confirm the appointment.

The vote was overwhelmingly carried.

RESOLVED to appoint Carolyn Forster to the post of Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer effective from a date to be determined by the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the HR Manager.

C47

MEMBER MOTION: PREPARING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR)

Councillor Silcock was invited to speak to his motion regarding preparing for LGR. He said he was minded to withdraw the motion following discussions with cross-party members and also assurances from the Leader about establishing a task and finish group to prepare for LGR in March 2026. He said a proposal would be brought back in the Spring and withdrew the motion.

The Chairman thanked members and reminded them of the Code of Conduct training the following day. He also said he would be delighted if members could attend the Christmas Carol Service as advertised in the Members' Bulletin.

The meeting was closed at 7.40pm.