SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Council meeting held on
Tuesday 24th March 2026
at 7.30pm
at Champions Manor Hall

Present:
Councillor Shearring (Chair)
Councillor Kelly (Deputy Chair)

Councillor Bentley	Councillor Massey
Councillor Birch	Councillor O'Brien
Councillor Crosbie	Councillor Sherlock
Councillor Eley	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Knox	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Price	Councillor Perham Lake
Councillor Wilson	Councillor Roberts

In attendance: Town Clerk and eight members of the public

C25-259 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were **RECEIVED** and **ACCEPTED** from Councillors Ferry.
Absent: Councillor Sismey & John

C25-260 Dispensation Considerations

Councillor Roberts requested a dispensation for agenda item 16 Grant Policy & CMH Hall Hire Policy. This was **ACCEPTED** by committee.

C25-261 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Price, Knox, Massey and Eley declared a non-registerable interest in Agenda item 6 Co- Option vacancy and declined to vote on this item.

C25-262 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 January 2026 were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting.
Proposed: Councillor Kelly
Seconded: Councillor knox
Vote: All in favour

C25-263 Public Questions

Residents attending for Agenda item 6 Co Option were all given an opportunity to introduce themselves and answer any questions from members.

C25-264 Co-Option Vacancy

Members considered the application forms attached to the agenda and completed a written ballot vote for the co-option vacancy.

Proposal: Request for a recorded vote
Proposed: Councillor O'Brien
Seconded: No seconder

Vote: Not carried

Proposal: To agree Alicia Cash as the Co Option member to the Town Council after receiving a majority vote.
Proposed: Councillor Shearring
Seconded: Councillor Kelly
Vote: All in Favour

Councillor Cash and the Town Clerk signed the Declaration of Office form.

7.55pm four members of public left the meeting

C25-265 Clubhouse at Champions Manor Hall

The Council received a verbal update from the Champions Manor Working Party
Proposal: To progress with the project of a Bowls Clubhouse at Champions Manor Hall
Proposed: Councillor Massey
Seconded: Councillor Perham Lake
Vote: All in Favour

Proposal: To pay the Town Council legal fees of £2750.00 plus VAT to get a lease in place.
Proposed: Councillor Roberts
Seconded: Councillor Sherlock
Vote: All in Favour

8.12pm three members of public left the meeting

C25-266 Reports from Committees are attached to the agenda.

The following reports were **NOTED.**

C25-266-1 Planning & Environment Committee

To note that a meeting was held on 25th November 2025 and 6th January 2026.

C25-266-2 Events, Community & Leisure Committee

To note that a meeting was held on 4th November 2025.
The chair Councillor Russ Crosbie thanked all the councillors that helped at the Christmas Fayre event in November 2025.

C25-266-3 Finance & Projects Committee

To note that a meeting was held on 2nd December 2025.

C25-266-4 Staffing Committee

To note that no meetings have been held since the Staffing meeting on 18th November 2025.

C25-267 Local Council award Scheme – Gold Quality Award Application

Proposal: Council resolved it continues to meet the criteria for the Bronze & Silver awards, which were awarded on 5 December 2025.
Proposed: Councillor Shearring
Seconded: Councillor Eley
Vote All in favour

Proposal: Council approved the Business & Action Plan 2026-2029 with amendments to page 9 & 17 together with supporting statements required for the gold quality award application circulated with the agenda.
Proposed: Councillor Birch
Seconded: Councillor O'Brien
Vote All in favour

Proposal: Council resolved that it has all requisite documentation and information in place to support the Gold Award application and that where appropriate, these documents are published on the Council's website.
Proposed: Councillor Eley
Seconded: Councillor Barnett
Vote All in favour

Proposal: Council approved the associated application fees – £60.00 payable to Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) £160.00 payable to the national Association of Local Councils (NALC) reflecting a 20% discount in recognition of the Council's achievement of Silver Accreditation in December 2025.
Proposed: Councillor Bentley
Seconded: Councillor Perham Lake
Vote All in favour

C25-268 Lease Blue Cage

Proposal: To defer this item until the next Council meeting on 12 May 2026 and the Town Clerk to check the insurance with Zurich.
Proposed: Councillor Eley
Seconded: Councillor Kelly
Vote: All in favour

Proposal: To write a letter to the Charity Commission regarding the completion of the MUGA lease with the SWF Playing Fields Charity.
Proposed: Councillor Bentley
Seconded: Councillor Eley
Vote: All in favour

C25-269 Items to Note

Council **NOTED** the following items.

- Julie Taylor in partnership with a family in Latchingdon and the YMCA, has generously donated a bleed control kit for use by the community and hirers at Champions Manor Hall.
- A comprehensive clean was undertaken by CT services at Champions Manor Hall on 17 February 2026.
- An inspection of Champions Manor Hall was conducted by the Public Health and Protection Services team at Chelmsford City Council on 17 March 2026, in respect of food hygiene compliance.
- Zurich Insurance has confirmed the claim relating to 20 Westway, South Woodham Ferrers, has now been closed, with no liability attributed to the Town Council and no financial settlement required.
- Monies raised for the two Town Mayor's charities for £202.43 to date for 2025/26 will be distributed equally prior to 31 March 2026.
- Concrete Canvas is currently consulting with Chelmsford City Council regarding proposals for a new mural within the Scholars Walk underpass.
- The Town Mayors Quiz night, scheduled for 21 March 2026 has been postponed due to low ticket sales.

C25-270 Annual Town Meeting

Council **NOTED** the arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting on 21 April 2026.

- Invitations have been extended to all community groups, City and County Councillors, the local Member of Parliament, grant recipients for 2025-2026, the Town Mayor's nominated charities and the Essex Community Policing Team.

• The guest speakers for the 2026 Annual Town Meeting will be Mr Harry Allen, a South Woodham Ferrers resident who completed the challenge of rowing across the Atlantic in the World's toughest Row and PC Charlie Bell of Essex Police who will speak on drug awareness and county lines within South Woodham Ferrers.

C25-271 Bandstand Expenditure

The Town Clerk updated Council on SLR Contractors withdrawal of the Bandstand maintenance quotation and new quotations for work were circulated at the meeting.

Proposal: Council agreed the quotation from LAPD Painting & Decorating Interior & Exterior for £4,940.00 Excluding VAT. Work to commence Monday 11 May 2026. Expenditure from Bandstand EMR FP25-168.

Proposed: Councillor Sherlock

Seconded: Councillor O'Brien

Vote: All in Favour

Council approved the budget code expenditure in the sum of £7,227.00 for the installation of the bandstand railings by Stratford Metal Fabrications from the EMR Project Fund minute ref C25-195 on 21 Oct 2025.

C25-272 LGR Working Party

Proposal: To approve the formation of a LGR (Local Government Reorganisation) Working Party at the Annual Council Meeting on the 12 May 2026. Terms of Reference will include six members, including Councillors Bentley, Shearring, O'Brien, Roberts and Price.

Proposed: Councillor O'Brien

Seconded: Councillor Bentley

Vote: All in favour

C25-273 Distinguished Honours

Council considered the nomination for the Annual Distinguished Honors Award, to be presented at the Annual Town Meeting on 21 April 2026.

Proposal: Council agreed the Distinguished Honours Award for 2026 will be presented to Mr Harry Allen.

Proposed: Councillor Perham Lake

Seconded: Councillor Eley

Vote: All in Favour

C25-274 Grant Policy & Hall Hire/Facilities Grants Policy

Council to consider both policies, supporting information and correspondence received from South Woodham Ferrers Village Hall.

Proposal: Council to keep the policies as presented and amend the poster to include a comma to read Community, & Champion Manor Hall Hire grants.

Proposed: Councillor Perham Lake

Seconded: Councillor Eley
Vote: Carried

Council **NOTED** the list of Grants awarded 2025-2026.

C25-275 Review of Policies

In accordance with Standing Order 5.j.xvii to xviii Council reviewed the following policies.

- CCTV Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Biodiversity Policy – recommended by P&E Committee PE-25-394
- Environmental Waste & Recycling Policy - recommended by P&E Committee PE-25-394
- Community Engagement Strategy – recommended by ECL Committee ECL-25-205.

Proposal: To accept all the policies as presented with no amendments.
Proposed: Councillor Wilson
Seconded: Councillor Thompson
Vote: All in Favour

C25-276 Representative on Outside Bodies

- Councillor Barnett updated that she had attended a meeting with the Chelmsford Association of Local Councils (CALC) on Wednesday 21st January. The group has decided to prioritise monitoring Local Government Reorganisation to ensure parish councils have a say on decisions where possible and are working closely with the Essex Association of Local Councils to do so. It was also agreed that a key priority of the group is to facilitate knowledge sharing across local councils. As a result, most future meetings will include a guest speaker, as demonstrated by the most recent meeting attended, which featured a presentation on Community Speed Watch."

- Councillor Wilson updated Council as representative on the Village Hall committee. The Village Hall has £25k in bank accounts as per 2nd March. The accounts are all done and independently examined. They are running a small loss at £3,300 approximately at the moment but predicted to break even at financial year end as Trading Company settles rent.
  Car park dispute incurred legal fees, but Village Hall has now cancelled the contract legally. An Asda grant was received for the new bingo group to provide tea and coffee for them. Family Nights restarted in February with eight families attending -next one on Saturday 25th April.
  Players' Lounge floor restoration project has been postponed until after AGM. AGM is on 25th March and all welcome to attend.

C25-277 Chelmsford City Council / Essex County Council

Chelmsford City Council
Council received report(s) from City Councillors/County Councillor concerning matters of interest to South Woodham Ferrers.

Councillor Donne Eley updated she had attended the Presentation Evening at William de Ferrers School on 5th March 2026 by Year 9 students on the Make space for Girls/Public Spaces project. Along with Cllrs Shearring, Kelly and Sherlock, representatives from CCC Community Safety Team and Parks and Green Spaces and parents/carers. It was really pleasing and inspiring to see the

presentations from a group of students who prior to the project were extremely lacking in confidence.

The footpaths in Saltcoats Park and Compass Gardens will be renovated over the next few weeks. The material has been delivered to Saltcoats and a contractor is in place to complete the work once the ground is firm enough to take machinery without damaging the grass/pitches.

Some of you may be aware that there was debris behind the bushes alongside the Burnham Road B1012 from a former homeless camp. Over the winter I noticed that this had been fly-tipped with old electrical appliances. It has been reported to Chelmsford City Council and should be cleared once the verges are firm enough to hold a large truck.

I would like to reassure all our female residents, or any resident who feels threatened in anyway, in SWF, that if they feel uncomfortable or threatened in any way by a stranger as they walk around the town, then they should report this to Essex Police immediately either on 999, 1010 or at Essex.police.uk. All such reports are taken seriously. This is following two incidents that took place by Marsh Farm on 13th March 2026. I have been assured by Sergeant Matt Dalby of Maldon NPT, that when the second incident was reported a car was despatched and a search was undertaken of the area. Unfortunately, no-one was found matching the description of the man. Patrols are still being undertaken in that area.

Councillor Eley informed Council and our residents that she will be standing for the Woodham Ferrers Division at the Essex County Council elections on 7th May 2026.

Councillor Terry Sherlock updated Sandon Park & Ride – If you use the double decker bus route seven hundred from First Bus the ticket includes parking.

05th March 2026 – he attended Opportunity East – The Infrastructure & Investment Conference in Ipswich. Jack Abbot MP spoke about a common brand and narrative for the East of England when seeking inward investment and government funding infrastructure. There are many large projects that could benefit us here for employment or travel etc. Sizewell C, Lower Thames Crossing, Stanstead expansion, Universal Theme Park in Bedfordshire. He had a quick chat with Jonathan Denby from Greater Anglia and should be having a future meeting with him, let me know any questions or points you would like me to raise, Tap and go now working from Wickford and Jonthan Denby did say that when you put on more trains it was amazing how the passengers just appear and start using the train.

Greater Essex Strategic Authority comes into being very soon, with Tom Walker the interim CEO.

Councillor Murrough O'Brien updated that he attended the Policy board meeting on the amended local plan. Councillor Bob Massey would give the formal outcome.

Essex County Council
Councillor Bob Massey updated:
Chelmsford City Council
Last week's meeting of the Development Policy Board, which Cllr O'Brien and I attended, reviewed the Feedback received for the Local Plan – Additional Sites Consultation, with particular attention to the potential threats to 'Green Wedges' from new smaller site proposals. It was agreed that authority be

delegated to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford to (I) make any necessary minor amendments to the Feedback Report Document and the Additional Sites Integrated Impact Assessment Feedback Report and prepare all necessary documentation to support the submission of the revised Local Plan for Independent Examination.

Essex County Council

Local Government Reorganisation

The County Council has been advised that HM Government will tomorrow (Wednesday March 25th) announce the proposed LGR structures, including how many Unitary Authorities will be created to replace the current fifteen authorities across Greater Essex.

Essex Highways

This lunchtime (Tuesday March 24th) Cllr Massey drove the Cabinet Member for Highways down to South Woodham to experience for himself the woeful state of the A132 between Shaw Farm and the Rettendon Turnpike. He agreed that further repairs are required, and will inform me when improvements will be undertaken,

He also advised me that he has initiated a project to fully rebuild the road and '*make it fit for the next fifty years*.' Initial thoughts from highways engineers suggest a budget of around £20 million, and reconstruction period - including significant disruption - of up to a year. Then, of course, the project will need to be funded.

And finally, he confirmed that the proposed upgrade of the 'Asda' pedestrian crossing to a light controlled 'Puffin' crossing is still scheduled for this summer's school holidays. Essex Highways requested a further £20,000 to cover road surface improvements, we can only hope that that includes resolving the ramp on the road outside Hamilton Court.

C25-278 Town Mayor's Announcements

A list of recent events attended by the Town Mayor attached to the agenda was **NOTED.**

C25-279 Media Release

- New Town Councillor Alicia Case
- Annual Town Meeting
- Scheduled bandstand maintenance
- Distinguished honours awarded

C25-280 To resolve to exclude the press and public for the remainder of the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960, as the following item contains confidential information.

Proposed: Councillor Crosbie
Seconded: Councillor Wilson
Vote: All in Favour

Council received an update from the Staffing Committee

C25-281 Next Meeting

The Annual Council meeting will be held on 12 May 2026 at 7.30pm.

There being no further business to discuss the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 9.38pm

Signed …… Date: 12 May 2026
(Chair of the Meeting)