

## **SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of the Council meeting held on  
Tuesday 14th January 2025  
at 7.30pm  
at Champions Manor Hall

**Present:**

Councillor Shearring (Chair)

Councillor Crosbie	Councillor Roberts
Councillor Eley	Councillor Kelly
Councillor Bentley	Councillor Piesse
Councillor Thompson	Councillor Sherlock
Councillor Massey	Councillor Wilson
Councillor Ferry	Councillor Birch
Councillor O'Brien	

In attendance: Town Clerk and five members of public

### **C25-86 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were **RECEIVED** and **ACCEPTED** from Councillor John, Humphrey, Price, Perham Lake and Sismey.

### **C25-87 Dispensation Considerations**

None received.

### **C25-88 Declarations of Interest**

None received.

### **C25-89 Confirmation of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

**Proposed:** Councillor Sherlock

**Seconded:** Councillor Bentley

**Vote:** All in favour

### **C25-90 Public Questions**

One member of the public spoke regarding having a recent accident in South Woodham Ferrers and reported that Essex Highways had responded quickly and dealt with the area of concern. Councillor Bob Massey to liaise with Essex Highways regarding the quality of the work completed.

7.45pm two members of the public left the meeting.

**Proposal:** To move item 13 Uniform Youth Land to the next item on the agenda.

**Proposed:** Councillor Roberts

**Seconded:** Councillor Bentley

**Vote:** **All in Favour**

### **C25-91 Uniform Youth Land**

Council **NOTED** an update by the Town Clerk on the Uniform Youth land at Salthaven Road.

7.58pm a member of public left the meeting.

### **C25-92 General Power of Competence**

**Proposal:** Council agreed it meets the criteria for eligibility for the General Power of Competence for 2025-2026, having both an electoral mandate of two thirds of members of the Council and a qualified Clerk.

**Proposed:** Councillor O Brien

**Seconded:** Councillor Bentley

**Vote:** **All in Favour**

### **C25-93 Meeting Schedule 2025/26**

**Proposal:** To agree the meeting schedule for 2025-26 attached to the agenda with amendment to move the 23rd of December 2025 Planning & Environment meeting to the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2026.

**Proposed:** Councillor Thompson

**Seconded:** Councillor Roberts

**Vote:** **All in Favour**

### **C25-94 Reports from Committees.**

The following reports were **NOTED**.

#### **C25-94-1 Planning & Environment Committee**

To note that a meeting was held on 26th of November & 17th of December 2024.

#### **C25-94-2 Events, Community & Leisure Committee**

To note that a meeting was held on 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2024.

#### **C25-94-3 Finance & Projects Committee**

To note that a meeting was held on the 3rd of December 2024.

### **C25-95 Interim Audit**

Council **NOTED** the Internal Audit report attached to the agenda.

### **C25-96 Budgets and Precept 2025-2026**

**C25-96.1** Council to approve the attached budget of £465,465 for 2025/26.

**Proposal:** Town Council approves the budget of £465,465 for 2025/26 as recommended by Finance & Projects Committee on 12th of November 2024.

**Proposed:** Councillor O Brien

**Seconded:** Councillor Eley

**Vote:** **All in Favour**

**C25-96.2** Council to approve that a gross precept of £465,465 for 2025/26 is submitted to Chelmsford City Council. Based on a tax base of 6102.57 Band D would be an amount of £76.27. For the 2024 – 2025 financial year the band D amount was £73.45.

**Proposal:** Town Council approve the budget of £465,465 for 2025/26 to be submitted to Chelmsford City Council in January 2025.

**Proposed:** Councillor O'Brien

**Seconded:** Councillor Eley

**Vote:** **All in Favour**

It was **AGREED** Councillor O'Brien as Chair of the Finance & Projects Committee would sign the precept form for Chelmsford City Council along with the Town Mayor in the absence of the Deputy Town Mayor Councillor Perham Lake.

### **C25-97 Review of Policies**

In accordance with Standing Order 5.j.xvii to xviii Council to review and agree the Annual Investment Strategy and General Reserves Policy attached to the agenda as recommended by Finance & Projects Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024.

**Proposal:** To agree the General Reserves Policy and Annual Investment Strategy.

**Proposed:** Councillor Bentley

**Seconded:** Councillor O'Brien

**Vote:** All in Favour

In accordance with Standing Order 5.j.xvii to xviii Council to review and agree the current policies attached to the agenda.

**Proposal:** To agree the following policies with no amendments

- IT Policy
- Internal Control and Internal Audit
- Review of Financial Risk Assessment
- Whistle Blowing Policy

**Proposed:** Councillor Crosbie

**Seconded:** Councillor Ferry

**Vote:** All in Favour

**Proposal:** To agree the Hall Hire Grant Policy with an amendment to organisations which have a closed or restricted membership moved from section what will not be funded to what may be funded.

**Proposed:** Councillor O'Brien

**Seconded:** Councillor Massey

**Vote:** Carried

**2 against**

## **C25-98 Community Engagement**

- Council considered introducing monthly/quarterly Councillor surgeries to enhance community engagement and **AGREED** not to proceed.
- The Town Clerk updated Council on a media promotion. Council **AGREED** not to proceed.

## **C25-99 Items to Note**

Community Resilience training has been booked on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 18.30 - 20.00pm

- Distinguished Honours Award - Council **NOTED** advertising and selecting of candidate's nominations for 2025 will be from 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025 to close 28th February 2025.  
To **NOTE** that this annual award is selected by Council on the 18th of March 2025 and presented at the Annual Town Meeting on 15th April 2025.
- The Champions Manor Hall conversion tender will be on the Contract Finder Government Website w/c 13/1/2025.

## **C25-100 Chelmsford City Council / Essex County Council**

### **Chelmsford City Council**

Councillor Sherlock Reported -  
Chelmsford City Council

On the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 in my role as Cabinet Deputy for Sustainable Transport - Chelmsford City Council I was part of an online meeting with all the local Bus companies and officers from ECC & CCC and I raised many issues relating to Chelmsford and the Bus Station in Chelmsford, It is good that I continue to make good connections at all levels with regards local bus services in Chelmsford and the wider area.

[Bus service improvement plan - GOV.UK](#)

Report on attending ECC Winter Transport Meeting – Local Bus – Date 04th December 2024 - on behalf of South Woodham Ferrers Town Council  
It was a well-attended and a great chance to speak to ECC and understand the best ways to move forward in trying to improve bus services in South Woodham Ferrers.

In the short term the best we can hope is to enhance communication with Passenger transport team at ECC and First Bus for any South Woodham Ferrers issues.

It was interesting to learn that in Essex we have 37 Bus operators and if commercial routes much of how these routes are run is down to the bus companies.

ECC also contract a very small number of non-commercial routes about 15 which they have direct control of and on some new developments the

developer contracts directly with the bus company for what is often a free service for a number of years. (Paid with 106 money)

It is always worth raising issues with Passenger transport team if the bus operator will not help as they are happy to put forward concerns.

The Travel Essex App is getting a major upgrade at the start of 2026 and this will help with issues like tracking bus arrivals and timetables and fix many issues with current app.( Live tracking with some bus companies will not work if they do not take part, First Bus is good with tracking and everyone understands tracking arrival issues at the moment and this should get better over the next year or so )

In the near term - (This coming year 2025 / 2026) we should pay attention to the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

When ECC get money from this government scheme it will come with regulations on how it can be used, if we understand these rules we can engage with ECC for some of this money to be spent in SWF.

With Local Government reorganisation this should see more focus on bus services and we should see improved services in the longer term.

I was told that in Essex it is not likely that we will go from 37 bus companies to a single franchised service, but this very much down to the Government and local Government reform.

Councillor Eley Reported -

### **Garden Waste (Brown Bin) Charge**

The roll out of CCC Charge for the Garden Waste (Brown Bin) commenced on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025. This was voted for and agreed at CCC Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Residents were pre-advised by myself in my CCC update at the last Town Council meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and through Comms updates on local social media pages.

Leaflets are being delivered to all residents via Royal Mail this week.

As of 9.30am this morning 2662 residents had already signed up.

### **SWF Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre.**

Councillors maybe aware that the pool had been closed before Christmas to allow new boilers to be installed and for a refurbishment of the Swimming Pool Area. These were completed on time and the Pool reopened on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2024.

The floor of the Sports Hall is being resurfaced and the Hall will be closed from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January to 26<sup>th</sup> January 2025. A resident highlighted this problem to me in September. It has taken a while due to arrange due to trying to find a suitable time to accommodate all users.

Councillor O'Brien Reported -

On 16/1/25 I will be representing local residents at Chelmsford City Council Policy Board to consider the new Local Plan for its third public consultation.

9.12pm Councillor Wilson left the meeting.

## **Essex County Council**

### **Highways**

Councillor Massey Reported -

Essex Highways continues to address priority repairs identified by residents - including resurfacing Thornborough Avenue and temporary repair to one of the footpaths off Celeborn Street.

The Highways team are expected to be working in South Woodham Ferrers next week, focusing on Colne Close and Butterbur Chase.

Beyond that I have requested that the next batch of repairs focus on footpath issues that have caused injuries to residents in recent months, including at the junction of Pintolls and Gimli Watch, and fuller repairs to the footpath off Celeborn Street.

### Council Tax

The County Council has today (January 14<sup>th</sup>) published its proposals for next year's Council Tax. They are proposing a 3.75% Council Tax increase for 2025/26. This is less than the 5% that the government would have allowed before having to call a referendum.

This comprises a 1.75% general increase and 2% increase in the adult social care precept.

For an average Band D property, this would mean an increase in the county council element of Council Tax of £1.09 a week.

The County Council Cabinet will consider whether to recommend the budget 2025/26 at a meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January, the budget will then be shared for approval at a meeting of the Full Council on 13<sup>th</sup> February.

### Devolution and Local Government Reform

At an extraordinary meeting of Essex County Council last Friday (January 10<sup>th</sup>), members voted to request HM Government to consider Essex to be one of the first counties to take part in the new devolution and local government reform programme.

This would likely create up to four unitary authorities - replacing the current County and District councils, the creation of an overarching Mayoral combined authority and the creation of an elected Mayor for Essex.

A new Mayor for Essex could take control of public transport, much as the Mayor of Manchester has.

The proposal has the support of all the second-tier authorities within 'Greater Essex' - including Southend and Thurrock.

The government is expected to advise its decision before the end of the month, this may include postponement of the planned County Council elections scheduled for May.

The government has also stated that all counties will undergo this transition during the life of this parliament; it is hoped that by 'going early' Essex might be better positioned to influence the solution's design, rather than having another structure imposed on us.

**C25-101 Town Mayor's Announcements**

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

**C25-102 Media Release**

Budget and Precept 2025-2026

**C25-103 Next Meeting**

Next Council meeting to be held on 18th of March 2025 at 7.30pm

There being no further business to discuss the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 9.18pm.

Signed .....  
(Chair of the Meeting)

Date: 18th of March 2025