

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Council meeting held on
Tuesday 18th March 2025
at 7.30pm
at Champions Manor Hall

Present:

Councillor Shearring (Chair)
Councillor Perham Lake (Vice 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	Councillor Price

In attendance: Town Clerk and three members of public

C25-104 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were **RECEIVED** and **ACCEPTED** from Councillor John & Humphrey.

Absent

Councillor Sismey

C25-105 Dispensation Considerations

None received.

C25-106 Declarations of Interest

None received.

C25-107 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed: Councillor Kelly

Seconded: Councillor Birch

Vote: All in favour

C25-108 Public Questions

One member of the public spoke regarding the use of vacant land at the Uniform Youth Site. The Town Clerk reported that the Men's Shed had not contacted the Clerk or Councillors for further discussion and recommended further communication if required as an agenda item.

7.43pm one member of public left the meeting.

C25-109 Co Option Procedure

In accordance with Standing Order 5.j.xvii to xviii Council reviewed and consider the Co Option procedure attached to the agenda.

Proposal: To accept the Co Option Policy

Proposed: Councillor Bentley

Seconded: Councillor Eley

Vote: All in Favour

C25-110 Councillor Co-option Vacancy

Council considered two application forms for the Councillor vacancy in the Collingwood Ward in accordance with the Co-option policy.

One applicant in attendance and answered questions from the Council.

Proposal: To agree Mia Barnett to be Co-Opted onto the Town Council.

Proposed: Councillor Thompson

Seconded: Councillor Kelly

Vote: All in Favour

8.01pm Mia Barnett signed the Declaration of Office form and joined the meeting.

C25-111 Distinguished Honours Award

Council considered the one nomination circulated with the agenda. Council **NOTED** the 2024-25 award will be presented at the Annual Town Meeting on 15th April 2025.

Proposal: To agree the Distinguished Honours Award 2024-25 is awarded to Martin Holden and Jane Holden

Proposed: Councillor Massey

Seconded: Councillor Birch

Vote: All in Favour

C25-112 Annual Town Meeting

Council **NOTED** the arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting on the 15 April 2025.

- All community groups, City & County Councillors, the local MP, Grant recipients 2024-25, Town Mayors Charity and Essex Community Policing Team have been invited to attend.
- The guest speakers for the Annual Town Meeting 2025 will be the Town Mayors Charity RNLI and the Essex County Council Cabinet Member Councillor Cunningham, for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport.

Town Clerk to invite all head teachers in local Schools, the Chairman of Chelmsford City Council and the incoming High Sheriff Julie Fosh.

C25-113 Reports from Committees are attached to the agenda.

The following reports were **NOTED**.

C25-113-1 Planning & Environment Committee

To note that a meeting was held on 28th January, 18th February and 25th February 2025.

C25-113-2 Events, Community & Leisure Committee

To note that a meeting was held on 11th February 2025.

C25-113-3 Finance & Projects Committee

To note that a meeting was held on the 4th March 2025.

C25-113-4 Staffing Committee

To note that a meeting was held on the 22nd January and 11th February 2025.

C25-114 Review of Policies

In accordance with Standing Order 5.j.xvii Council reviewed four policies-

The Civil Protocol Policy attached to the agenda.

Proposal: To agree the Civil Protocol Policy with amendment to 'Duties which the mayor may carry out 'not in order of importance' include

In accordance with Standing Order 5.j.xvii Council to review the Procurement Policy attached to the agenda as recommended by Finance & Projects Committee on 4th March 2025.

The Town Clerk recommend this policy be deferred until the Standing Orders are updated in line with the recent Financial Regulation changes on Procurement.

Proposal: To defer the policy to a later date.

In accordance with Standing Order 5.j.xvii Council to review the Biodiversity Policy attached to the agenda as recommended by Planning & Environment on 25th February 2025.

Proposal: To agree the Biodiversity Policy and look to update next year.

In accordance with Standing Order 5.j.xvii Council to review the Safer Recruitment Policy attached to the agenda as recommended by Staffing Committee on the 11th February 2025.

Proposal: To agree the Safer Recruitment Policy with two amendments in 5.5 Interview panel.

- include 'not essential' to be trained in interview techniques
- interview panel 'should' consist of at least two people who completed the short listing.

Proposed: Councillor O'Brien

Seconded: Councillor Piesse

Vote: All in Favour

C25-115 Clerks Report

Council **NOTED** the report from the Town Clerk.

C25-116 Outside Maintenance Contract

In accordance with Financial Regulation 5.12 iii. Council considered the recommendation from the Planning & Environment Committee on 25/2/25 to continue with our current open maintenance contractor on a rolling two-year contract on the grounds of quality and price.

Proposal: To agree the contract presented to Council and the continuation with our current open maintenance contractor JW Davis on a rolling two-year contract.

Proposed: Councillor Birch

Seconded: Councillor Sherlock

Vote: All in Favour

C25-117 Love your Parish Days

Due to a deadline request of 21st March 2025 from Chelmsford City Council, Town Council **AGREED** the attached completed written Town Clerk to submit to Chelmsford City Council.

C25-118 Devolution

Town Clerk gave an update on devolution and information attached to the agenda from recent Clerks Forum meeting with EALC.

C25-119 Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS)

The Town Clerk is applying for the Silver Quality Level of the Local Council awards scheme. Minute Ref C24-52.

Proposal: To resolve that the Town Council has all the documentation and information in place for the Silver Award and where applicable is published on our website.

Proposed: Councillor Crosbie

Seconded: Councillor Eley

Vote: All in Favour

C25-120 Chelmsford City Council / Essex County Council

- Council considered the presentation of reports from County and Borough councillors and agreed they were a valuable source of information for the Town Council. No changes to be made.

Chelmsford City Council

Councillor Eley Reported –

Lots of potential changes for the Town Council with Devolution.

Volunteer session 21/3/25 cancelled for the new Community Orchard being organised by Chelmsford City Council due to damage to machinery.

Garden waste charge leaflets are available in both foyers at Champions Manor Hall for residents if they haven't received them by post. Residents can subscribe at any time throughout the year for £60.00.

Councillor Sherlock Reported –

The Community Orchard has planted some new trees.

Councillor Sherlock attends the Chelmsford and Braintree bus meetings attends to feed information when required.

Councillor Sherlock was filmed in SWF on his cycling route and the cycling and walking maps will be included in his next blog.

Councillor O'Brien – No Update
Essex County Council
Council Massey Reported –
Devolution and Local Government Reform

As I reported at the last meeting of the Town Council, Essex County Council submitted the letter to HM Government regarding Devolution and Local Government Reform on behalf of the various district, borough, city and unitary authorities. This was accepted by HM Government and Essex is confirmed to be within the first tranche of Counties to undergo reorganisation.

This means that the County Council elections for May this year have been suspended and that an election for the new 'Mayor of Essex' is expected to take place on May 7th 2026.

Today (March 18th) Essex County Council's cabinet agreed to submit its interim proposals to the Government, these have been agreed by all the District and Unitary Councils.

Various options for the structure of local authorities going forward are being discussed, suggesting 3, 4 or 5 unitary authorities. The Government's guidance is that authorities should represent around 500,000 residents; and Essex currently has around 1.9 million residents.

The final decision will be made by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) following a further submission in September.

The timeline for Devolution and LGR is:

21st March 2025: Submission of Interim Proposals Plan to the Government

26th September 2025: Submission of the developed Unitary Authorities and implementation plans to Government

February 2026: Delivery of implementation plan and key stages/milestones

May 2026: Mayoral Elections

May 2027: Shadow Authority Elections

April 2028: Vesting Day (District and County Council cease to exist)

Highways

The majority of local highways repairs in recent months have focused on footpath repairs, several of which have caused injuries to residents.

I'm pleased to be able to report that, after several years of badgering, repairs will be affected to the foot path/cycle path between Chetwood and Chamberlain's Ride during the month of April.

Similarly - after pressing for more than five years - the proposal to upgrade the 'Asda' zebra crossing to a light-controlled crossing has finally reached the design phase. The upgrade has been estimated as costing around £180k which is too high for the Chelmsford Local Highways Panel - which has an annual budget of £250k. It will therefore be considered by ECC's new "Chairmen's Panel".

As always, I invite members of this council to notify me of any highway or footpath issues that require urgent attention, including the appropriate Essex Highways Tracking reference.

C25-121 Town Mayor's Announcements

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

C25-122 Media Release

- Distinguished Honours Award
- New Councillor for the Collingwood Ward Mia Barnett

C25-123 Next Meeting

The next Council meeting will be Annual Council held on 13th May 2025 at 7.30pm.

There being no further business to discuss the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 9.10pm.

Signed
(Chair of the Meeting)

Date: 13th of May 2025