

**15 January 2025 at 7pm**

**Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Duke Street,  
Chelmsford, CM1 1JE**

## **Membership**

Councillor K. Franks (Chair)

## **and Councillors**

I. Fuller, B. Massey, S. Rajesh, J. Sosin, M. Steel, and S.  
Young

## **Parish Council Representatives**

**Councillor K. Bentley (South Woodham Ferrers Town Council)**  
**Councillor K. Golla (Chelmsford Garden Community Council)**  
**Councillor P. Jackson (Great Waltham Parish Council)**

Local people are welcome to attend this meeting, where your elected Councillors take decisions affecting YOU and your City. There is also an opportunity to ask your Councillors questions or make a statement. These have to be submitted in advance and details are on the agenda page. If you would like to find out more, please telephone the Democracy Team on (01245) 606480 or email [committees@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:committees@chelmsford.gov.uk)

# Governance Committee

15 January 2025

## AGENDA

### 1. Apologies for Absence

### 2. Minutes

To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2024.

### 3. Declaration of Interests

All Members are reminded that they must disclose any interests they know they have in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they must do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they become aware of the interest. If the interest is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they are also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting.

### 4. Public Question Time

Any member of the public may ask a question or make a statement at this point in the meeting. Each person has two minutes and a maximum of 15 minutes is allotted to public questions/statements, which must be about matters for which the Committee is responsible.

The Chair may disallow a question if it is offensive, substantially the same as another question or requires disclosure of exempt or confidential information. If the question cannot be answered at the meeting a written response will be provided after the meeting.

Any member of the public who wishes to submit a question or statement to this meeting should email it to [committees@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:committees@chelmsford.gov.uk) 24 hours before the start time of the meeting. All valid questions and statements will be published with the agenda on the website at least six hours before the start time and will be responded to at the meeting. Those who have submitted a valid question or statement will be entitled to put it in person at the meeting, provided they have indicated that they wish to do so and have submitted an email address to which an invitation to join the meeting and participate in it can be sent.

### 5. Chair's Announcements

### 6. Monitoring Officer Report

7. Polling District Review

8. Update re Member and Officer Code(s) of Conduct and register of interests

9. Gifts and Hospitality Report

10. Annual Whistleblowing Report

11. Work Programme

12. Urgent Business

To consider any other matter which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

## MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

16 October 2024 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor K. Franks (Chair)

Councillors I. Fuller, S. Rajesh, J. Sosin, M. Steel, and S. Young

Also in attendance –

Parish Councillors K. Bentley, K. Golla, and P. Jackson

Independent Person –

Mrs C Gosling

Mr P Jeremiah

Mr D Lamb

Ms P Mills

### 1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received for the meeting.

### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

All Members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or other registerable interests where appropriate in any items of business on the meeting's agenda. None were made.

The Monitoring Officer also clarified that, where members of the Governance Committee simply had knowledge of a standards complaint or were a witness to an incident, there was no need for them to declare an interest or withdraw from the committee when considering the Monitoring Officer update report which was simply for noting. If the Committee was discussing a complaint about a member, the position would be different. In relation to reports for noting concerning gifts and hospitality declarations where a councillor who was on the committee had made such a declaration, there would similarly be no need for them to withdraw from an item for noting and the minutes would note this advice accordingly.

#### 4. Public Question Time

No questions or statements were received from members of the public.

#### 5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed members to the first Governance Committee meeting since May as the June 2024 meeting had been cancelled due to the General Election.

#### 6. Monitoring Officer Report

The Committee received an update on standards complaints since May 2024. Members were informed that there had been twenty-six complaints received since May 2024, most alleging a failure to register an interest or disrespect. It was advised that seventeen complaints were from the same complainants and eleven complaints had been received in a 24-hour period. The Monitoring Officer also informed that twenty-two of the complaints had been completed and four complaints were currently held in abeyance pending police consideration. It was noted that out of the completed complaints, nine complaints had been considered invalid, five had been concluded as 'no further actions', and eight had been given 'other actions' where they were dealt with informally such as reminders of the councillor's compliance with the Code of Conduct including updating their register of interest forms.

Members were also advised that there would be a parish-tier training session planned which would give them further advice on how what steps they could take to avoid complaints that they had breached the Code of Conduct. It was advised that there were certain things that councillors could do to ensure compliance with the Code, such as ensuring that their register of interests was up to date.

*(Mrs C Gosling entered at 7.06pm)*

**RESOLVED** that the current statistical information as to complaints made were noted and agreed for the report to be published on the Council's website.

(7.05pm to 7.08pm)

#### 7. Information Governance Update

The Committee received an annual update on the Council's approach to the assurance and management of information from the Council's Data Protection Officer.

With respect to statutory requests, it was advised that the Council received up to 1000 each year, with 934 processed in 2023/24. It was advised that these requests were mostly from journalists, researchers, and residents. Members were informed that the Information Governance Team responded to 93% of the requests within the statutory timescales compared to 90% in 2022/23. They were also informed that one of the information requests was referred to the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO) however the Council's decision was upheld. It was also advised that Digital Services have developed a new system for statutory requests.

Regarding data breaches, the Committee were advised that these had increased to 38 incidents in 2023/24 compared to 35 in 2022/23. It was reported that the breaches were mainly from employees inputting email addresses in the wrong fields or that they were emailed to the wrong recipient. There had also been one security breach and two other incidents including errors in online forms and reports. It was advised that there were no cases relating to data breaches referred to the ICO in 2023/24.

The Committee learned that a campaign had been run in April to provide employees with more awareness of the dangers of phishing. Staff were sent a phishing email containing a tax rebate offer and it was another positive learning experience for the Council.

In relation to training and awareness, it was reported that the Council had achieved a 92% completion rate for training and that there were some positive actions with regards to those being chased. Officers advised that they strive for the numbers of completed training to be as high as possible. The Committee were also advised that the next version of Cyber Security Awareness training would be rolled out to the organisation soon.

Officers also advised that the Council had stepped up efforts with regards to cyber security. It was noted that security officers were employed externally and that an action plan had been completed. With regards to data retention, members were advised that it had been agreed with management team that emails older than seven years would be automatically deleted. It was advised that this would be facilitated by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025. It was hoped that staff and members would be discouraged to use Outlook for storage.

In response to the questions and comments from members, it was advised that;

- Digital Services would be facilitating the deletion of emails automatically from Outlook accounts and that if staff and members would like to save their emails, they would be able to save these into their OneDrive accounts. It was also advised that staff and members of the Council would be notified a number of times before 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025.
- Regarding training for members on saving their emails, officers advised that they would consider how to disseminate awareness of the deletion of emails.
- With regard to dealing with breaches from external contractors, it was advised that officers had several ways of resolving an issue including dealing with it from the initial contract. It was ensured that each party were aware of their responsibilities.
- The ICO could issue extensive fines for those who had not responded to Freedom of Information requests.
- With regards to training, it was advised that mandatory cyber awareness training was rolled out to the organisation annually. Digital Services also offered planned exercises to smaller teams. In terms of those who clicked on the link from the phishing simulator, officers advised that they would also be issued mandatory training.

**RESOLVED** that the information governance update be noted.

(7.08pm to 7.25pm)

#### 8. Senior Responsible Officer's report in relation to the Council's RIPA arrangements

The Committee considered a report updating them on the Council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) arrangements. Members were advised that RIPA related to covert powers given to local authorities for specific and limited purposes such as CCTV surveillance. It was reported that the threshold for RIPA had been raised in cases where this might need to be used, for example in relation to benefits fraud.

Members were advised that that the Council had not needed any RIPA approvals for the last year but ensured that staff were properly trained to remain ready should the arrangements be needed. They were also informed that inspections by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) were undertaken every three years with the most recent inspection conducted last year by way of a written response. It was reported that the inspectors were satisfied with the arrangements. Officers also advised that the Council had acquired a new RIPA coordinator and new Authorising Officers, who were noted to be experts in field and were working with other local authorities as well. Members noted that RIPA policies would continue to be reviewed together with any ongoing actions through the RIPA officer working group.

In response to query on what circumstances RIPA could be used for, it was advised that these arrangements could only be used for activities that carry a sentence of 6 months of imprisonment. Members were also informed that the Council had not experienced those levels as of yet. However, there were cases where officers had conducted non-RIPA surveillance. In order to obtain a RIPA, the Committee advised that this would be initiated by an individual investigating officer who would then speak to the manager. The Authorising Officers would also be notified, and the legal team would then be involved in making the court application.

**RESOLVED** that the report to be noted.

(7.25pm to 7.32pm)

#### 9. Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review

The Committee received an annual review of the complaints sent to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (Ombudsman) involving the Council, containing the statistical information of the complaints received. The importance for the Council to learn from the complaints to improve service delivery was emphasised. Members were advised that the Ombudsman had no concerns with the Council and that the Council had taken the complaints received seriously.

Members were also informed of the new Complaints Handling Code which would be taken into account from April 2026 and that additional guidance was to be issued to local authorities. It was advised that the Council had started reviewing and looking to adopt the new Complaints Handling Code. The Committee was also informed of a new digital system for handling complaints.

**RESOLVED** that the annual review be noted.

(7.32pm to 7.34pm)

#### 10. Annual Report of the Governance Committee 2023/24

The Committee received the annual report of the Governance Committee, outlining the work of the Committee for the last municipal year.

It was advised that the report was usually received by the Committee in June to then be presented to the July Full Council meeting, however the June meeting had been cancelled due to the General Election. Members were advised that the report would instead be presented to the December Full Council, along with the annual reports from the Audit & Risk and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

**RESOLVED** that the Annual Report of the Governance Committee for 2023/24 be approved and submitted to Full Council.

(7.34pm to 7.35pm)

#### 11. Update on Register of Interests in City and Parish tier Councils

The Committee received an update on the register of interest forms for City and Parish-tier authorities. Members were advised that to improve oversight and increase compliance with register of interest forms, an annual report had been introduced in 2022. It was noted that there was only one outstanding register of interest form to be received from a parish-tier council and that this would be chased.

Members were advised that an online register of interest form had been introduced to parish-tier councils, however it was reported that there was little appetite for it. It was also reported that there would be an annual reminder sent to City Councillors to update their register of interest forms and any offers of gifts and hospitality. The Monitoring Officer advised that these reminders would be extended to Council staff as well and that an online form would be developed for officers' register of interest forms. It was advised that the annual assurance process had been successful in reminding councillors to update their register of interest forms.

In response to questions and statements from members, it was advised that;

- The annual assurance report had prompted parish-tier councillors to update their register of interest forms however this responsibility remained with councillors. It was also advised that city councillors were reminded by the end of the calendar year and parish-tier councillors were reminded around July or August to update their register of interest forms.



- It was not the responsibility of the Monitoring Officer to check the quality of register of interest forms. However, it was noted that queries were raised where there was some missing information in some of the forms received, namely home addresses. It was advised that many complaints had been received regarding missing information in the register of interest forms.

**RESOLVED** that the report to be noted.

(7.35pm to 7.41pm)

## 12. Work Programme

The Committee received an update on their work programme for 2024/25. Members were advised of future items such as the adoption of the model code at parish-tier level, a statutory meeting of group leaders, and a training session for Governance Committee. It was advised that a mock standards hearing could be undertaken as part of training. Members agreed that the training would best be deferred until June committee.

**RESOLVED** that the work programme of the Committee be noted.

(7.41pm to 7.44pm)

## 11. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.44pm

Chair



---

# Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**15 January 2025**

---

## **Monitoring Officer's Report**

---

Report by:  
Monitoring Officer

---

Officer Contact:  
Lorraine Browne, Legal & Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer,  
email: [lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk), tel: 01245 606560

---

### Purpose

To update members on the current position in relation to standards complaints.

### Recommendations

1. To note the current statistical information and agree that Appendix 1 should be published on the Council's website to confirm this.
- 

### 1. Standards Complaints

- 1.1. The Appendix to this report sets out the latest statistical data related to standards complaints.

- 1.2. Members will see that there has been four further complaints since the last report in October 2024 which has been concluded. The 4 linked complaints continue to remain held in abeyance.

## List of Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Statistical information regarding complaints made

#### Background papers: Nil

---

#### Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: It is good practice for statistical information to be provided to the Governance Committee. Where any complaints are referred to in the appendix, a summary of the complaint without any personal data is provided.

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

---

#### Consultees: None

---

#### Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Complaints Procedure

---

**Standards Enquiries and Investigations Statistics – Localism Act 2011**

**March 2024 – to October 2024**

<b>Status of Complaint Categories</b>	<b>Total No.</b>	<b>Case No.</b>	<b>City, Parish tier Councillor</b>	<b>Date Issue First Raised</b>	<b>Alleged Breach or Issue Raised</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
<b>1. No formal complaint, invalid or withdrawn</b>	2	27/24	Parish tier	Nov 24	Various allegations	<p>Most allegations made within the complaint invalid as outside MO jurisdiction. One aspect of complaint determined as NFA by the MO without seeking views from the councillor concerned or an independent person as a result of the complaints history in accordance with exception provided within complaints process.</p> <p>Invalid – outside MO jurisdiction</p> <p>Note – clarification concerning MO jurisdiction has been added to the website landing page.</p>
		28/24	Parish tier	Dec 24	Allegations relating to breach of procurement and financial rules	
<b>2. No further action required after consultation</b>	2	29 & 30/24	Parish tier	Dec 24	Allegations relating to disrespect/bullying in social media posts	Capacity unclear but concluded unlikely to be a breach of the code of conduct in any event

Status of Complaint Categories	Total No.	Case No.	City, Parish tier Councillor	Date Issue First Raised	Alleged Breach or Issue Raised	Current Position
with one of the Independent Persons						
3. Other action after consultation with one of the independent Persons	0					
4. Complaint on hold	4	23 -26	Parish tier & city	Sept 24	Various including disrespect, bullying & discrimination	Standards complaints held in abeyance pending police consideration.
5. Decision as to appropriate action still awaited						
6. Complaints being investigated	0					
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>					

### Formal Complaint Outcomes

	<b>Case No. and Councillor</b>	<b>Committee Date and Decision</b>	<b>Date Issue First Raised</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
<b>Outcome of Investigations</b>				
<b>Other Action</b>				



---

## Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

15<sup>th</sup> January 2025

---

### Interim Polling District Review

---

#### Report by:

Nick Eveleigh, Chief Executive & Returning Officer

---

#### Officer Contact:

Murphie Manning

Democracy and Elections Manager

[murphie.manning@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:murphie.manning@chelmsford.gov.uk)

01245 606 510

---

#### Purpose

To outline and recommend where changes to the current polling arrangements will be required further to the recent review of the Essex County Council electoral divisions by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

#### Recommendations

1. The committee approve the amendment of the Polling District arrangements as outlined in the report, to match the Essex County Council boundaries due to come into effect for 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025. If arrangements are made for these elections to be postponed, the implementation of these boundaries will be postponed accordingly. If no postponement is to be undertaken, these changes will take effect on the republication of the electoral register on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025.
2. The committee approve future amendments required to ensure that the polling district arrangements match the relevant Essex County Council boundaries at the time. Any amendments must relate only to ensuring that the polling district boundaries are coterminous with the Essex County Council boundaries, not any other boundary changes. For example, if the new boundaries are put in place

and an Essex County Council by-election is called before the Essex County Council boundary review order takes effect.

---

## 1. Background

- 1.1. A polling district and polling place review seeks to establish the best voting arrangements for electors within the local authority area. The statutory requirements of polling districts are set out as follows:

Each parish must be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply, and each polling district must have its own polling place. However, this does not apply if the size (or other circumstances) of a polling district means that the location of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors.

- 1.2. A full review of the suitability of polling places and polling districts was completed in 2024, in which, various polling district and polling place changes were implemented. The arrangements agreed in this review remain appropriate in most circumstances, other than where the recent LGBCE review has redrawn some Essex County Council division boundaries and created one parish ward. This review seeks only to rectify these discrepancies to ensure that future elections can be administered effectively.
- 1.3. The proposal to amend these boundaries to ensure that they are conterminous was published on Chelmsford City Council's website on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and a consultation period commenced, with a closing date of 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025. No responses were received during this consultation.
- 1.4. The new boundaries agreed by the LGBCE have been made by way of a legal order, due to come into effect for the next scheduled Essex County Council elections, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025. However, it should be noted that there are ongoing discussions regarding devolution and local government reorganisation across Essex. We understand that if government wish to proceed with this, the scheduled elections and subsequently boundary order may be postponed. Without further clarification on this matter, we must ensure that we maintain the flexibility to put into effect the relevant polling district boundaries to align with the appropriate Essex County Council boundaries.

## 2. The proposed changes

### 2.1. Proposal A

This proposal relates to realigning the boundary between The Avenues polling district (Patching Hall ward) and Rectory Lane polling district (Marconi ward) so that the boundary does not divide Rivermead Industrial Estate and the entirety of the area is included within the Rectory Lane polling district, as already agreed in the LGBCE review.



This amendment is required following the LGBCE review reconfiguration of the boundary of the Chelmsford West county division to include the whole of Rivermead Industrial Estate.

## 2.2. Proposal B

This proposal also relates to Rivermead Industrial Estate, the area of the estate that currently falls within Springfield Chelmer (The Lawns ward) also needs to move to the Rectory Lane polling district (Marconi ward).

This is also because the LGBCE review has adjusted the boundaries of the Chelmsford West county division to include the whole of Rivermead Industrial Estate.

## 2.3. Proposal C

The LBGCE review was required to create a new parish ward for the Chelmsford Garden Community Council area, as the new boundary between the Chelmer and Broomfield and Writtle county divisions divided the North ward of the parish area.

The new parish ward boundary now follows Channels Drive to create a North ward and a Central ward. Therefore, we must divide the Belsteads polling district (Broomfield and the Walthams ward) to follow this.

The northern part of the polling district will be renamed North Belsteads (reference SBF) and the southern section will create the new polling district, with the proposed name South Belsteads (reference SBG). The polling place for both polling districts will remain Essex Barn, Channels Estate.

No changes for any other polling districts or places were identified for amendment in this review.

## 3. Conclusion

3.1. Further to the recent LGBCE Essex County Council boundary review, an interim polling district review was required to ensure that all of the polling arrangements are compliant and effective. This interim review has sought to resolve this.

3.2. Due to the ongoing uncertainty regarding the potential postponement of the upcoming elections and the implementation of the boundary changes order, flexibility in the implementation of the outcome of this review is required. It is requested that the committee considers the proposals outlined above and makes a decision on the recommendations independently.

List of appendices:

Appendix A – Acting Returning Officers final recommendations

Background papers:

[The Electoral Commission guidance on polling place and polling district reviews](#)

[Local Government Boundary Commission for England Essex County Council boundary review](#)

---

## Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional:

Compliance with s18A Representation of the People Act

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity:

Relevant age, disability and accessibility requirements have been considered in undertaking this review. No changes proposed or existing arrangements will adversely or disproportionately impact on any protected groups.

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

---

## Consultees:

None

---

## Relevant Policies and Strategies:

None

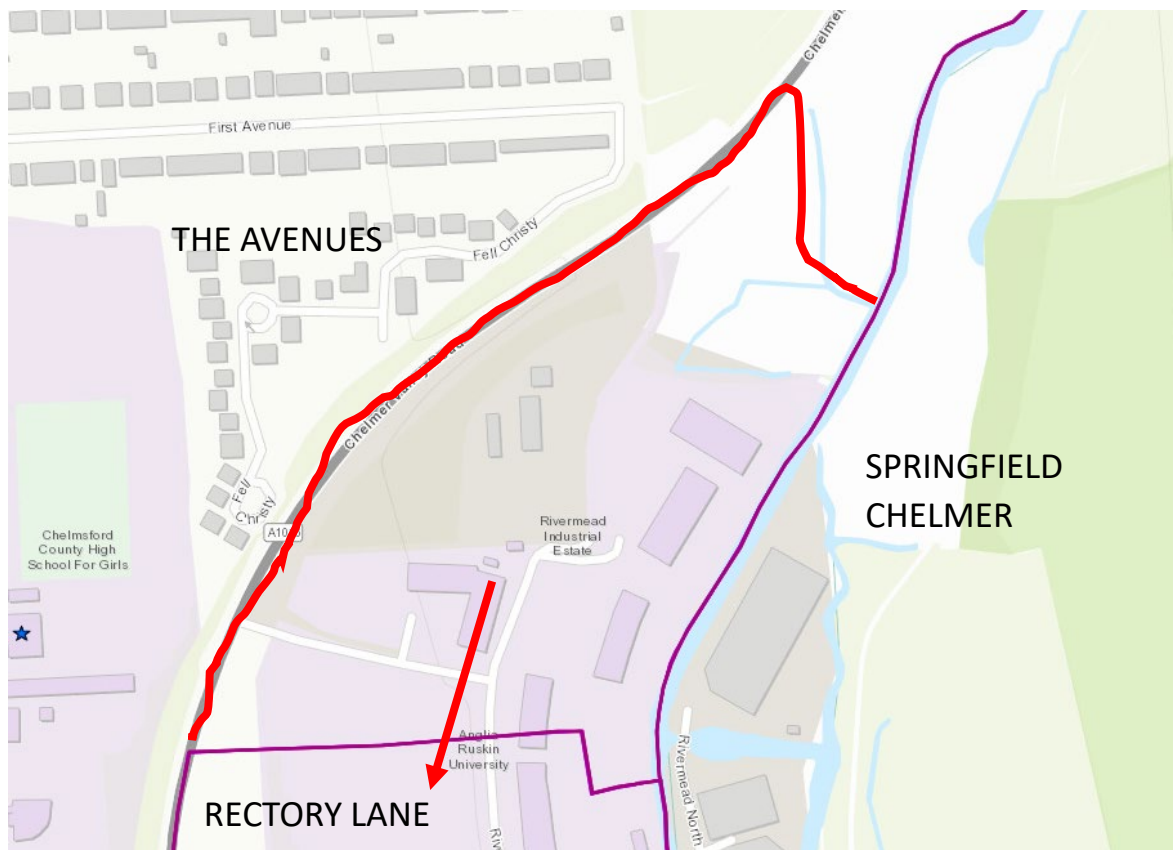
---

## Acting Returning Officers Final Recommendations

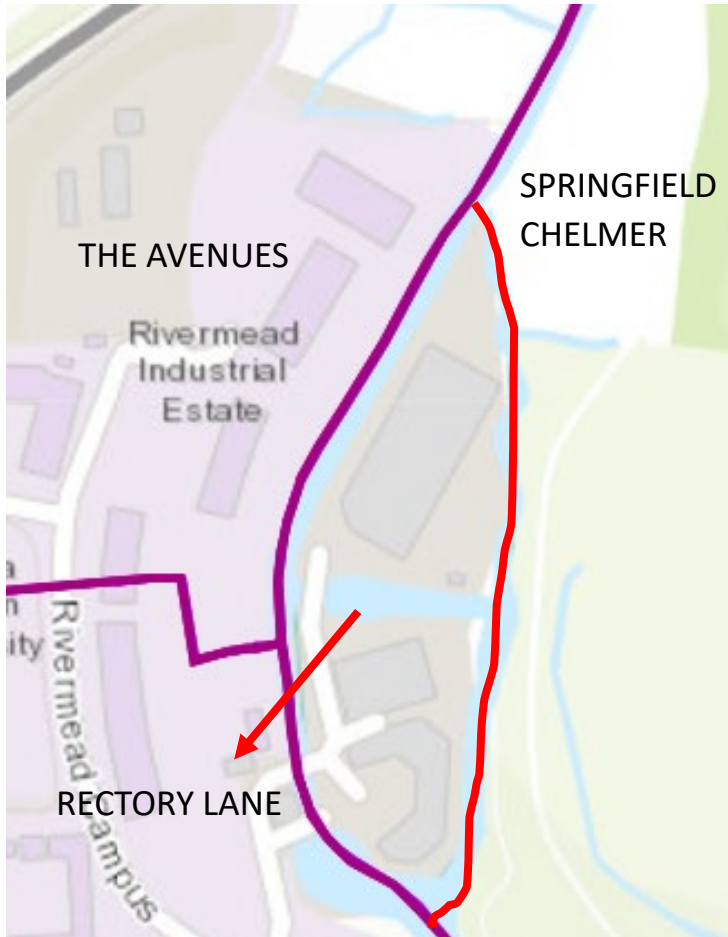
As a thorough review was conducted in 2023-24, the Acting Returning Officers recommended changes only relate to the boundary changes introduced by the Essex County Council boundary review. You can [view a map of the new boundaries](#).

### Rivermead Industrial Estate

- Proposal A: realign the boundary of The Avenue so that the area of Rivermead Estate that currently falls within The Avenues also moves to Rectory Lane

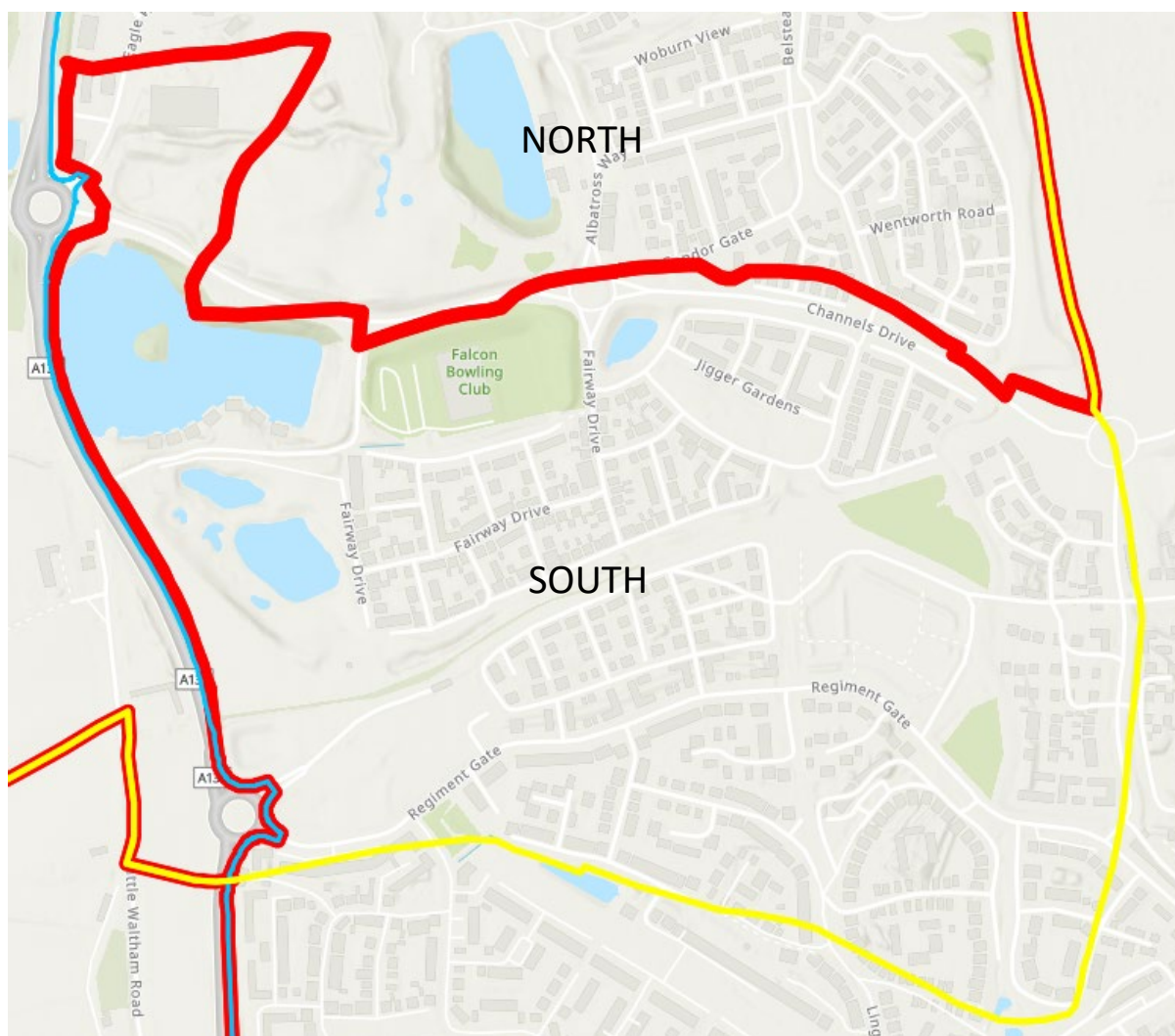


- Proposal B: realign the boundary of Springfield Chelmer Polling District, so that the area of Rivermead Estate that currently falls within Springfield Chelmer moves to Rectory Lane polling district



### Belsteads polling district

- Proposal C: divide the Belsteads polling district along the new county division line (following Channels Drive) to create a North Belsteads and a South Belsteads polling district



All of the changes are needed to ensure that the polling district boundaries align with the new County Council boundaries, due to come into effect at the next scheduled County Council elections on 1 May 2025.



---

## Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**15 January 2025**

---

### **Update re Member and Officer Code(s) of Conduct and register of interests**

---

**Report by:**  
Monitoring Officer

---

**Officer Contact:**  
Lorraine Browne, Legal & Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer,  
email: [lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk), tel: 01245 606560

---

#### **Purpose**

To update members in relation to compliance by members and officers with the requirements of the relevant code of conduct in relation to registers of interests and other declarations that are required to be made.

#### **Recommendations**

1. To note the update
- 

#### **1. Member Register of Interest – reminder update**

- 1.1. An email was sent to all city councillors on 16<sup>th</sup> December reminding them of the need to keep their register of interest up to date. This highlighted that the most common reasons for updating being necessary arose from a change in address or employment. The website is updated as any amendments are received.

1.2. The need for the new councillor elected on 12<sup>th</sup> December to complete their register of interest form is dealt with during their induction and is added to the website once completed.

## 2. Officer Register of Interest

2.1 The Council is introducing online forms for the completion of the register of interests and the making of various declarations that officers are required to make under the Officer Code of Conduct.

2.2 The employee code of conduct requires certain officers (Category 1) to make an annual declaration as to the register or interests and various declarations, including nil returns. All other officers (Category 2) provide a register of interests and/or make a declaration where they trigger the need to do so. For example, if a Category 2 officer accepts a gift or hospitality with a value of £50 or over then they make a declaration, but Category 2 officers do not need to declare a nil return.

2.3 The new online form will be live in the New Year for both Category 1 and Category 2 officers to complete the initial process online and to update this in future where the need arises. Any new staff will be made aware of the relevant requirements during induction. In future Category 1 officers will be asked to annually review and update their register of interests form and similarly a reminder will be issued to Category 2 officers. This will help ensure that the register of interests & declarations is kept up to date.

2.4 Once the initial process is complete the code of conduct and the process will be reviewed to see if any improvements/clarifications need to be made to the policy, guidance or process. There will be further updates to Governance Committee, and this will be added to the workplan for 25/26 and for the future accordingly.

### List of Appendices

None

Background papers: Nil

---

### Corporate Implications:

Legal/Constitutional: Both Code(s) of Conduct fall within the remit of the Governance Committee which already monitors compliance with the member code of conduct on a regular basis. Compliance with the requirements of the Officer Code of Conduct will also be reported to committee annually.

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

---

Consultees: None

---

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Member and Officer Codes of Conduct

The Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

---





---

# Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**15 January 2025**

---

## Gifts and Hospitality Report

---

Report by:  
Monitoring Officer

---

### Officer Contact:

Lorraine Browne, Legal & Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer, email:  
[lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk), tel: 01245 606560

---

### Purpose

To update the Committee on offers of Gifts and Hospitality from January to December 2024.

### Recommendations

That the report to be noted.

---

## 1. Background

- 1.1. At its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010, the Standards Committee agreed that an annual report should be made on offers of Gifts and Hospitality which have been made to Members of the Council and when the Governance Committee assumed responsibility for these matters, this annual report was brought to this Committee.

## 2. Offers Made

- 2.1. Offers of gifts and hospitality to members of Chelmsford Council for the period January to December 2024 can be found at Appendix 1. In summary, there were two declarations by members.

2.2. With regards to offers of gifts and hospitality to officers of the Council, there were three offers to be noted for 2024.

2.3. The Monitoring Officer confirms that it was appropriate for members and officers to accept the offers made.

#### List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Offers of Gifts and Hospitality (Councillors) January to December 2024

Appendix 2 – Offers of Gifts and Hospitality (Officers) January to December 2024

#### Background papers:

Nil

---

#### Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: Councillors and Officers are required to declare any offers of gifts and hospitality above a certain threshold (£50) and it has been the Council's longstanding practice to annual report the details to Governance Committee.

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: No equalities impact assessment necessary.

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

---

#### Consultees:

None

---

#### Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Member and Employee Codes of Conduct

---

**APPENDIX 1**

**Offers of Gifts and Hospitality (Councillors) – January to December 2024**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Gift/Hospitality</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Whether Accepted</b>
70	14.6.24	Mascot	Handmade top and Skirt	£75 estimate	3C & Co	Accepted – thank you to councillor in relation to councillor role
71	24.11.24	Lardge	2 Theatre Tickets	£72	Chelmsford Theatre	Accepted – links with cabinet role

**APPENDIX 2**

**Offers of Gifts and Hospitality (Officers) – January to December 2024**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Gift/Hospitality</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Whether Accepted</b>
225	8.2.24	Sustainable communities	Working Dinner and Drinks Reception	£40	Beartas	Yes – links with officer role
226	18.11.24	Connected Chelmsford	Complimentary ticket to Cornerstone barrister Planning Day	£185	Cornerstone Barristers	Yes – links with officer role
227	18.11.24	Connected Chelmsford	Complimentary ticket to Cornerstone barrister Planning Day	£185	Cornerstone Barristers	Yes – links with officer role



---

# Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**15<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

---

## **Annual Whistleblowing Report**

---

### **Report by:**

Director of Connected Chelmsford

---

### **Officer Contact:**

Lorraine Browne Legal and Democratic Services Manager, Tel: 01245 606560,  
email: [lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk)

---

### **Purpose**

To provide an annual update to members of the Governance Committee on the operation of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

### **Recommendations**

1. To note the contents of the report as regards complaints received.
- 

## **1. Background**

1.1. The Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure was first introduced in October 1997. Since that time the policy has been updated and reviewed periodically to ensure it is compliant with any changes in legislation or guidance, most notably a light touch review was undertaken during 2023/4.

1.2. The policy establishes a system whereby employees of the Council, including agency workers, consultants, users of its services, members of the public and Councillors, are able to report suspected wrongdoing. By doing so the Council

publicly declares that it does not tolerate malpractice or fraudulent activities in the operation of its services.

- 1.3. The Council's Whistleblowing Policy highlights the legal protection for workers who "blow the whistle" (i.e. the 'Whistleblower') and ensure that they do not suffer any recriminations, victimisation or harassment as a result of raising a concern with the Council. An employee who makes a protected disclosure benefits from legal protection if they have a reasonable belief that the issue being raised is in the public interest.
- 1.4. Employees are protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 as amended, which means that the Council cannot discriminate against them because they made such a complaint. That protection is not subject to any qualifying period of employment and is referred to as a 'day one' right in employment law. The principles of protection are also applied to non-employees under the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.
- 1.5. The Council's appointed Whistleblowing Officer is the Director of Connected Chelmsford. However, the day-to-day management and handling of issues raised is dealt with by the Legal & Democratic Services Manager or, in their absence, the Human Resources Services Manager. Both have delegated authority to receive and investigate complaints under the procedure whilst safeguarding the confidentiality of the complainant as far as is possible. Normally this means the identity of the whistleblower will only be known by the officer managing the complaint and any investigator. All complaints raised are fully considered and dealt with swiftly.
- 1.6. In many cases the issue raised is not strictly a whistleblowing matter but a complaint about a service received from the Council. In those cases the matter is passed to the relevant department to resolve direct with the complainant. This is noted on the papers and is then dealt with outside the Whistleblowing procedure.
- 1.7. As is best practice an annual report is made to the Governance Committee regarding the issues addressed. The last such report was made in 2023 and this report provides the update since that time. The Council's existing Retention and Destruction Policy in relation to Whistleblowing complaints is to retain records for 6 years after matters are completed and accordingly the report has been updated to include data from the last 6 years.

## 2. Position Update and Analysis

2.1. The table below provides a history of the number of whistleblowing reported cases received over the previous years:

Year	Number of complaints received
2018-2019 ( to Oct 2018 only)	13
2019 (October 2018 – December 2019)	5
2020 (January - October 2020)	5
2021 (November 2020 to November 2021)	12
2022 (December 2021 to September 2022)	5
2023 (October 2022 to Sept 23/October to December 2023)	9/1
2024 (January to December)	9

2.2. A summary of the 10 complaints received over the past year (this includes the 1 complaint October to December 2023 and the 9 complaints received during 2024) are set out below. Members are reminded that further information cannot be provided due to the confidentiality protection to which whistle blowers are entitled. 7 reports alleged wrongdoing by staff or in relation to services. These have been investigated and/or action taken as appropriate. 2 of these reports alleged concerns about named employees but those individuals did not work for the council. The 3 complaints that should have been dealt with as grievances or service complaints were considered and actioned appropriately by the relevant service.



**How they were processed**

No public interest dimension so could not be dealt with as a WB complaint, or was instead assessed and investigated as a service complaint or grievance	3
Assessed and investigated as a whistleblowing complaint.	7
Not capable of resolution by the City Council (i.e. outside our jurisdiction)	0

2.3. It is apparent that both staff and members of the public have confidence in the Council and are willing to raise concerns. The electronic facilities for logging complaints through the dedicated whistleblowing mailbox and through website forms remain the preferred method of communication. The publicity arrangements for whistleblowing also appear to be embedded and working well.

2.4. Every effort is made to maintain confidentiality where requested. When this is not possible complainants are advised and provided with the reasons. Complainants’ details are not disclosed until they are made aware of how they will be used. This allows officers to follow up on concerns raised and to provide progress updates and feedback when a case is concluded. This approach instils trust and confidence in the arrangements in place and fosters a relationship of openness and accountability.

2.5. The policy is part of staff induction training and is easily accessible on the Council’s website. It should be noted that Audit and Risk Committee have reviewed the Fraud and Corruption Policy and Anti Bribery Policy. The Whistleblowing Policy has been reviewed to ensure they are aligned and compliment the overall arrangements. Training in relation to whistleblowing and fraud/corruption training modules was provided to senior managers and all staff at the end of 2024.

**3. Conclusion**

3.1. Members of the Governance Committee are asked to note the details as to the actions taken and complaints received for the latest annual review.

List of appendices: None

Background papers: None

## Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: The legislative requirements are addressed in the report

Financial: None, although the process enables reporting of potential fraudulent activities and malpractices that may affect the financial position of the Council

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: The process underpins the promotion of a culture of openness and transparency and creates an environment where whistleblowing is encouraged and supported.

Risk Management: The process assists to minimise the risk of malpractice and fraud within the Council

Equality and Diversity: The policy and procedure has not changed so no impact assessment is required

Health and Safety: Establishment of whistleblowing procedures ensures that both Council employees and users of its services are able to confidentially report matters of concern (including those with H&S implications) and for these to be proactively addressed.

Digital: None

Other: None

---

### Consultees:

None

---

### Relevant Policies and Strategies:

The report takes into account the following policies and strategies of the Council:

- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure
- Fraud and Corruption Strategy
- Anti-bribery Policy



---

# Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

**15<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

---

## **Work Programme**

---

Report by:  
Monitoring Officer

---

Officer Contact:  
Lorraine Browne, Monitoring Officer, tel:01245 606560, email:  
[lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.browne@chelmsford.gov.uk)

---

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to receive members' comments on the Committee's future work programme.

### **Recommendations**

1. Members are invited to comment on the Committee's work programme, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, and make any necessary amendments to it.
- 

## **1. Background**

- 1.1. The Work Programme is reviewed by the Committee at each meeting. The current version is attached at Appendix 1 to this report and includes the proposed work for future meetings, based on the Programme content for recent years.

## 2. Conclusion

2.1. Members are invited to comment on the Committee's work programme and make any necessary amendments to it.

### List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Governance Committee Work Programme

### Background papers:

Nil

---

## Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: None

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

---

### Consultees:

None

---

### Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Not applicable

---

## **Governance Committee Work Programme**

## **Appendix 1**

### **15<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

MO report

Update in relation to Officer and Member codes of conduct

Annual Whistleblowing report for 2024

Annual Gifts/hospitality report for 2024

Work programme

### **5<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

If there is no additional business the meeting will be cancelled.

### **June 2025**

MO report

Annual constitution review report

Local Government Ombudsman complaint handling code

Annual Report of the Governance Committee 24/25

Work programme for 25/26 municipal year

Committee training 25/26 - to be confirmed

### Ad hoc reports

- Training
- Politically exempt officer posts