MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2026, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Jacobs (Chair)
Councillors D Andrews, R Carter, N Clements, N Cox, T Deffley, C Horner, S Nicholls, M Swainston, G Williams and J Wyllie

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Crystall, A Daar, V Glover-Ward, M Goldspink, D Hollebon, A Holt and S Hopewell

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Peter Mannings	-	Committee Support Officer
Erica Carter	-	Committee Support Officer
Jonathan Geall	-	Director for Communities
Claire Sime	-	Assistant Director (Place Shaping)
Ben Wood	-	Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services
Lindsey Creed	-	Communications Officer
Katherine Gilcreest	-	Assistant Director (Housing)
Hilary Marsh	-	Programme Manager

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

David Harding	-	Thames Water
Jake Morley	-	Thames Water
ManFai Tang	-	Environment Agency
Chris Wilson	-	Environment Agency

1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE 2026/27 CIVIC YEAR

It was proposed by Councillor Swainston and seconded by Councillor Carter, that Councillor Horner be appointed Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026/27 civic year. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Horner be appointed Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026/27 civic year.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor E Buckmaster and Councillor Marlow.

3 MINUTES - 10 MARCH 2026

Councillor Nicholls proposed and Councillor Swainston seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reminded Members and Officers to use the microphones as the meeting was being webcast.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6 SEWAGE DISCHARGE AND CUMULATIVE IMPACTS ON EAST HERTFORDSHIRE'S RIVERS

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented a report that supported the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration of concerns about the cumulative impact of sewage discharge on rivers in East Hertfordshire, following a Motion agreed by Council on 22 October 2025.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that she was presenting the report jointly with the Executive Member for Wellbeing as the issues impacted upon both portfolios. The report supported the committee's consideration of an issue of significant concern to residents - the cumulative impact of sewage discharge on rivers across East Hertfordshire.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that a motion was approved at Council in October 2025, which recognised both a responsibility to protect rivers and the growing evidence of declining water quality, driven in part by the frequency and scale of wastewater discharges.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that senior representatives from Thames Water and the Environment Agency were in attendance, and this provided an important opportunity for Members to better understand the scale of the issue, the data behind it, and the respective roles and responsibilities of those organisations in managing and regulating our water environment.

Members were advised that the session was primarily about information gathering and constructive scrutiny. It was an opportunity for Members to ask questions, test the evidence, and explore how the cumulative impacts of sewage discharge were being addressed, particularly given concerns that such events were no longer exceptional, but becoming increasingly frequent.

Members were advised that it was also important to be clear about the role of the planning system in this context. The Executive Member said that where there was clear evidence that wastewater infrastructure was inadequate, this may constitute a material consideration in planning decisions, particularly where development could lead to unacceptable environmental impacts such as deterioration in water quality.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that where Members should, however, be aware that the delivery of sewage infrastructure rests with the statutory undertaker, and national policy generally assumes that the necessary upgrades will be delivered. She said the adopted District Plan policies WAT6 (Wastewater Infrastructure) and DEL1 (Infrastructure and Service Delivery) already provided a robust basis for managing this.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the insights gained from the session would be important in informing future work, including the preparation of the new Local Plan. The council was currently commissioning a Water Cycle Study to strengthen the evidence base and ensure the council fully understood infrastructure capacity and its impact on river health, so that future growth was properly planned, aligned with capacity, and environmentally sustainable.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth encouraged Members to use the session to engage openly and constructively with the guests from the Environment Agency and Thames Water.

The Chairman thanked representatives from Thames Water and the Environment Agency (EA) for attending and invited questions from Members.

A Member questioned whether the frequency of sewage discharges indicated that storm overflows had become an operational feature of Thames Water's network rather than exceptional emergency measures. A representative from Thames Water did not accept that characterisation and stated that storm overflows remained part of the designed operation of wastewater systems during periods of heavy rainfall and groundwater infiltration. He emphasised that treatment works did not discharge continuously and that EDM monitoring data showed a clear relationship between rainfall events and storm overflow operation.

Members sought clarification on the proportion of Thames Water's recently raised capital that would be invested in reducing sewage discharges. They were advised that investment would be prioritised across the region in accordance with regulatory obligations and environmental performance requirements. A detailed breakdown of local investment could be provided to the Committee.

Questions were raised regarding the impact of climate change and increasingly frequent extreme weather events on the sewerage network. Thames Water acknowledged that greater resilience would be required in the future and that the key challenge was reducing the volume of surface water entering the sewer system. The importance of sustainable drainage systems was highlighted, together with improved surface water management and planning controls to minimise additional pressures on existing infrastructure.

The Committee heard that storm overflows had always formed part of wastewater system design. Thames Water explained that discharges occurring during storm conditions were generally highly diluted and followed treatment and storage processes before entering watercourses.

Members were advised that forthcoming continuous water quality monitoring would provide a more detailed understanding of the environmental impacts of discharges.

The Environment Agency representatives advised that increased inspection activity was enabling greater regulatory oversight of storm overflow operation. Members were informed that inspections were being undertaken to ensure storm tanks were only used during storm conditions and that the Agency had also carried out specific work to investigate and reduce dry-weather spills.

Members expressed concern that responsibility for pollution was frequently attributed to factors outside of Thames Water's control. Questions were raised regarding groundwater infiltration and whether this reflected deteriorating infrastructure. Thames Water acknowledged responsibility for infiltration occurring within its network and advised that significant investment was being made in sealing manholes, relining pipes and undertaking wider network improvements to reduce groundwater ingress.

The Committee discussed customer bills, shareholder returns and investment in infrastructure. Thames Water acknowledged Members' concerns but advised that its current owners had not taken external dividends since acquiring the company in 2017. Members were advised that recent increases in customer bills reflected the need to fund substantial investment programmes required by regulators and environmental improvement schemes.

A Member raised concerns regarding the transparency of Thames Water's reporting systems and the extent to which residents were able to see what action had been taken following reports of pollution or operational issues.

The Committee discussed the importance of the River Lea catchment and the capacity of Rye Meads Sewage Treatment Works. Members expressed concern regarding the impact of future housing growth on the facility and sought reassurance regarding this future capacity. They were advised that it would obtain further information from its Developer Services Team, and they would provide a response to the Committee.

Questions were also raised regarding the effectiveness and timeliness of environmental enforcement. The Environment Agency representatives acknowledged historical concerns and advised that recent legislative changes had strengthened its enforcement powers.

Members were also advised that provisions within the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 intended to strengthen accountability within water companies. Members discussed the causes of pollution incidents and the distinction between permitted storm overflow discharges and pollution resulting from sewer blockages or asset failures.

Questions were asked on the role of water companies in the planning system and Members questioned whether Thames Water's status as a non-statutory consultee limited its ability to influence development proposals.

Thames Water representatives advised that while it would welcome a stronger role within the planning process, it currently provided advice and recommendations to planning authorities where capacity issues were identified. Representatives confirmed that they could recommend planning conditions or development phasing where infrastructure constraints existed.

A Member asked the Environment Agency to comment on "Rights of the River" policies adopted by some local authorities and whether a national approach might strengthen river protection. Members were advised that Officers would look into this matter.

In response to further questioning regarding Rye Meads, Thames Water representatives acknowledged concerns raised by Members regarding historic discharge issues affecting nearby land.

The Chairman thanked representatives from Thames Water and the Environment Agency for their attendance and their responses to Members' questions. Thames Water offered to provide contact details to Members and encouraged direct engagement regarding future concerns about investment programmes, network capacity and environmental performance.

Councillor Andrews proposed, and Councillor Nicholls seconded, a motion that Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcome the attendance of representatives from Thames Water, and the Environment Agency and Members note the presentations delivered, acknowledging the information and evidence presented and the responses provided to Members' questions.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that (A) Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcome the attendance of representatives from Thames Water and the Environment Agency; and
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> (B) Members note the presentations delivered, acknowledging the information and evidence presented and the responses provided to Members' questions.

7 PRESENTATION FROM THAMES WATER

Jake Morley and David Harding gave a presentation that set out a background to the operation run by Thames Water and a number of general updates to the operations that were managed by the company. Members were also given an overview of investments being implemented by Thames Water.

Jake Morley said that Thames Water was cognisant that there was a huge amount of work to be done to improve river health. Members were advised that hopefully some of the updates would demonstrate that progress was being made.

It was acknowledged that progress was a slow process, but there were green shoots and a turnaround was underway. Jake Morley set out why sewage discharges took place and set out some general information updates about Thames Water, river bodies and sewage discharges, investment and planning matters.

Jake Morley said that there had been a 20% drop in pollution and Thames Water was aware that infrastructure required significant investment. He said that there had been a 20% increase in capital investment in the first 6 months of the current financial year to £1.3 billion.

Jake Morley spoke at length about sewage discharge into rivers and said that the matter was not clear cut and there were some root causes which started in the network every day. He set out in detail these root causes for Members and concluded by mentioning the bin it and don’t block it message.

Members were advised that the weather was a major deciding factor in the operation of the treatment works. David Harding gave an overview of the Rivers in East Herts. He and Jake Morley set out the details of the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) schemes and summarised the primary issues facing the company at the major treatment works. Members were advised of significant schemes completed at Thames Water sites, and information was given about reducing algae blooms and improving the quality of river discharge.

Members were advised about missed connections and how this impacted upon the Thames Water network. Jake Morley said that the company did plan for development, and it was process that started with the local authority. The modelling looked at current capacity concerns, and the modellers would then advise on the flows coming through and on appropriate phasing plans.

Jake Morley concluded that Thames Water had been open and transparent about the shortcomings of the company, and the company wanted the public and local authorities to be a part of the changes.

Members received the presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

8 PRESENTATION FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Chris Wilson and ManFai Tang (Environment Agency) gave a presentation that covered the regulatory role of the agency, storm overflows, sewage discharges and river health, together with an update on activity taking place within East Hertfordshire.

Members were informed that where storm overflows occurred, both the water company and the Environment Agency (EA) were required to investigate and take action to address underperforming assets in line with the Government's Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan.

Members were also advised that, through the Water Industry Regulation Transformation Programme introduced in 2023, the EA had significantly increased its regulatory activity. The Committee was advised that enforcement action could include variable monetary penalties, enforcement undertakings and prosecution where appropriate.

The EA representatives outlined recent legislative and policy developments, including the Government's Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan introduced in 2022 and the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025, which provided stronger enforcement powers and increased transparency requirements for water companies.

Members were advised that monitoring coverage had increased from fewer than 1,000 monitors in 2016 to over 14,000 nationally, with all storm overflows now monitored. A reference was also made to the ongoing Independent Water Commission review, which was expected to consider wider reforms to water regulation.

In respect of river health, Members were advised that ecological status was assessed through the Water Framework Directive using a range of indicators, including water quality, habitat condition, nutrient levels and fish passage.

Members were informed that only around 16% of rivers nationally currently achieved "good" ecological status and that no rivers within East Hertfordshire currently met that standard. It was emphasised that river health was affected by multiple factors, including sewage discharges, agricultural runoff, physical modifications to rivers and barriers to fish movement.

The Committee heard that significant investment was being delivered through the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP). Local priorities included storm overflow improvements, phosphorus reduction schemes and enhanced monitoring.

The EA representatives highlighted several projects within East Hertfordshire. The Committee was advised that improving river health would require long-term partnership working between regulators, water companies, local authorities, landowners, environmental organisations and local communities. While progress was being made through enhanced monitoring, strengthened regulation and increased investment, significant challenges remained, and environmental improvements would take time to deliver.

Members received the presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

9 EMERGING PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH AN ARTS-FOCUSED CHARITY

The Executive Member for Communities submitted a report inviting Members to review emerging plans to establish an arts-focused charity that would enable, fund and support delivery of arts and cultural activities primarily within the boundaries of the current district of East Hertfordshire, though potentially beyond this area following local government reorganisation.

The Executive Member for Communities said that she was seeking early feedback on the development of the proposal and to provide assurance that any model adopted would be legally compliant and transparent in both its establishment and operation.

Members were reminded of the council's successful delivery of the Arts in East Herts festival over the past two years. The Executive Member for Communities set out the benefits of this initiative for residents, particularly in rural areas in terms of accessing local arts activities.

The Executive Member for Communities said that the festival contributed positively to residents' mental health and wellbeing, while also supporting the local economy through increased footfall and spending.

Members were advised that the programme had adopted an inclusive definition of the arts, encompassing activities such as creative writing, music, dance, and visual arts. The events were accessible, with many offered at low or no cost, and had supported local creatives and volunteers.

The Executive Member for Communities said that the proposed CIO would aim to build on this success by securing external funding and enabling the local creative community to continue delivering activities that benefit residents in terms of their health and wellbeing.

The Committee were advised that BEAM had originally been established to provide an arts offer across the district, particularly through outreach work, but was currently unable to benefit from Gift Aid on donations due to its position within the council.

The Executive Member for Communities said that the creation of a CIO would enable donations to be managed in a legally compliant and transparent manner, allowing Gift Aid to be claimed and strengthening outreach provision.

Members were advised that discussions with legal advisers were ongoing, and that the CIO would need clearly defined aims, objectives, and a robust business plan in order to meet the requirements of the Charity Commission.

The Executive Member for Communities said that an Arts in East Herts event would take place in September and October, supported by seed funding from the Community Grants Programme, specifically the East Herts Lottery.

Members were advised that a reference group would be established to support the delivery of the 2026 festival and to act as a shadow body in the development of the CIO. This group would include interested Members and representatives from the local arts community.

Councillor Nicholls said that she had taken part in both previous Arts in East Herts events. She welcomed the proposals and expressed her strong support for the proposal. She highlighted a significant unmet need for support for artists and creatives in East Herts.

Councillor Nicholls emphasised that any future organisation should not be wholly council-run and should have dedicated trustees and organisations to focus on delivery and what was required by and from artists and creatives and the local community. She said that a diverse and relevant expertise and experience was vital.

Councillors Nicholls said that whatever entity was set up should have trustees that were representative of those different stakeholders. She referred in particular to having trustees from the creative community, the education sector, consumers, venues and arts advisers.

Councillor Nicholls supported the idea of a charitable model (CIO or CLG) and between 5–9 trustees would be a good option to represent the breadth of knowledge and diversity required to run a successful organisation.

Councillor Wyllie said that he had some concerns about how the trustees maybe appointed and he suggested a nomination only process with no appointment to avoid any political input. He said there could be a service level agreement on the charity to give the council control over any financial input.

Councillor Horner said that having a CIO was the best way forward to ensure a robust corporate governance framework or body where there were going to be people employed by a charitable organisation. He said that an organisation that was at arm’s length was required as East Herts Council may be wound up due to LGR.

Councillor Carter talked about the remit of the charity and said that there should be clarity on the function of any charity that was set up. Councillor Clements said that he was aware of feedback that the current ownership model at BEAM meant that they could not apply for various grants and services.

The Executive Member for Communities said that BEAM being run by the council cut off the option of it being eligible to apply for grants. She set out in detail the proposed model for donations. The Director for Communities said that Officers had sought legal advice from Browne Jacobson, and this company had a track record of advising councils on the legality of setting up charities.

Councillor Nicholls proposed, and Councillor Wyllie seconded, a motion that Members had provided feedback to the Executive Member for Communities on the emerging proposals to establish an arts-focused charity to enable arts and cultural endeavours primarily within the boundary of the current district of East Hertfordshire.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that Overview and Scrutiny Committee have provided feedback to the Executive Member for Communities on the emerging proposals to establish an arts-focused charity to enable arts and cultural endeavours primarily within the boundary of the current district of East Hertfordshire.

10 HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods submitted a report that set out a review into the progress of actions to deliver the priorities of the Housing Strategy 2022-27 and invited Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations regarding performance against these actions to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods thanked officers for their work in preparing the update, which was set out in detail at Appendix A. Members were advised that the Action Plan was structured around the following strategic priorities:

1. Delivery of additional affordable housing;
2. Enabling a wider range of accommodation;
3. Providing support for the most vulnerable residents; and
4. Delivering high-quality, sustainable housing options for older people suited to their needs.
5. Improve the sustainability and quality of homes.

The Executive Member of Neighbourhoods said that she was pleased with the progress that had been made on these priorities and particularly pleased about the new homes which had been provided at truly social rent.

A Member sought clarification on paragraph 1.3 (page 47) regarding the use of Section 106 (S106) commuted sums to reduce rents from affordable rent to social rent, noting uncertainty as to how this mechanism operated in practice.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods explained that S106 commuted sums were received from developers where on-site provision of affordable housing was not feasible. These funds were applied to housing provision, including in combination with Council resources and external funding (e.g. Homes England).

Members were advised that this enabled Registered Providers to deliver homes at lower cost, resulting in social rent levels. The Director for Communities further clarified that S106 funding may be used both to increase the number of affordable homes within schemes and to reduce rent levels for specific units.

Members highlighted concerns regarding the definition of affordability, noting that developer-led definitions did not always reflect local housing need. Concerns were also raised regarding the reduction of affordable housing provision through the planning process.

The Committee discussed the issue of empty properties and their potential to contribute towards temporary and affordable accommodation supply. The Director for Communities advised that data on empty homes was held through council tax records and examples of current initiatives, including the use of flats above shops for temporary accommodation.

Members also raised concerns regarding affordable housing provision in rural areas, particularly in relation to transport accessibility. The Director for Communities said that transport considerations were addressed through the planning process and that applicants retained some choice through choice-based lettings.

The Committee also commented on of the number of homes delivered at social rent through S106 subsidy, future actions to address empty properties, the continuation of housing strategy priorities beyond 2027, particularly in light of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Members were advised that a number of schemes have contributed to social rent provision to date, and that initial discussions with neighbouring authorities had commenced to ensure alignment of future strategies post LGR.

A Member raised a specific example of a long-term empty property and suggested consideration of enforcement action. The Committee also suggested that the wording in the report relating to S106 funding and rent reduction be clarified to avoid misunderstanding.

Councillor Wyllie proposed and Councillor Swainston seconded, a motion that a review be undertaken into the progress of actions to deliver the priorities of the Housing Strategy 2022-27 and Overview and Scrutiny Committee make recommendations regarding performance against these actions to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that (A) Overview and Scrutiny Committee have reviewed the progress of actions to deliver the priorities of the Housing Strategy 2022-27; and

(B) the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods be made aware of any recommendations regarding performance against these actions.

11 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2026-31

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods submitted a report that presented the draft version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2026-31 for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and onward recommendation to the Executive.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods advised that, under the provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002, all local authorities are required to undertake a homelessness review and to publish a strategy every five years.

Members were advised that this new strategy would be the fifth such document for East Herts. Members were advised that the operating context had significantly changed since the previous strategy, including the introduction of the Renters Reform/Rights legislation for 2025 and the Government's national plan to end homelessness December 2025.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that the new draft strategy set out five key priorities, which were:

1. Prevention and early intervention to reduce homelessness;
2. Increasing the supply and suitability of temporary accommodation, reducing reliance on bed and breakfast;
3. Improving pathways into and out of supported housing for vulnerable single people;
4. Maximising the availability of affordable housing;
5. Reducing rough sleeping and ensuring it is brief and non-recurring.

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Members sought clarification on the current use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

The Committee was advised that 25 households were currently placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, and this constituted a reduction from around 30–31 households in the previous year. Members were advised that pre-pandemic levels were significantly lower, and it was noted that rising homelessness presentations had increased demand for temporary accommodation.

Members raised concerns regarding tensions between maximising affordable housing provision and the Council's wider housing delivery challenges, including unmet targets.

The Assistant Director for Housing acknowledged that opportunities to increase affordable housing must be actively pursued and housing delivery was influenced by site viability and market conditions. Members were reminded that difficult planning decisions played a role in achieving housing outcomes.

Members queried whether legislative changes, including the end of no-fault evictions, would reduce homelessness.

The Committee was advised that no fault evictions have been the leading cause of homelessness locally for the past 2–3 years. Evictions initiated prior to legislative changes would continue through the court system for 12–18 months and early signs suggest an increased rental market supply and some stabilisation or slight reductions in rental costs. Members were advised however that it remained too early to determine the full impact.

Members discussed the links between homelessness and mental health, physical health and wider social vulnerabilities and Officers confirmed that partnership working partnership working was underway through Healthy Hubs, the Citizens' Advice, NHS partners, and social prescribers.

Members were advised that current interventions often occur too late in the process, and the strategy aims to strengthen early intervention and improve partnership working.

Members were also advised that further work is planned to enhance collaboration with Citizens Advice and other partners.

Members noted that the draft strategy was currently out for public consultation, and it was confirmed that consultation is due to close mid-June 2026.

Members highlighted the importance of prioritising single people, including consideration of allocation policies and pathways through housing registers.

Councillor Andrews proposed and Councillor Horner seconded, a motion that the content of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2026-31 had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Members had raised any further points for consideration for inclusion by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods before a revised version was brought to the Executive on 14th July 2026.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) consider the content of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2026-31; and

(B) Overview and Scrutiny Committee have raised any further points for consideration for inclusion by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods before a revised version is brought to the Executive on 14th July 2026.

12 ANNUAL REPORT FOR 25 26 AND REFRESH OF LEAF PRIORITIES

The Leader of the Council submitted a report that provided Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on performance against LEAF priorities over the 2025/26 year and invited comments from Committee Members for refreshed LEAF priorities going forward.

The Committee was advised that the Corporate Plan was first considered by Council in February 2024 and Overview and Scrutiny Committee last considered the annual report in June 2025 - for Members to review performance and to comment on the plan.

The Leader said that the latest report provided an update on performance, and he welcomed suggestions, comments and thoughts from Members in respect of possible updates or amendments to the Corporate Plan.

The Chair praised the officers who had been involved in developing the mobile phone application that had been introduced in respect of waste collections. The Vice-Chair also commented positively on the app and its functionality.

The Vice-Chair commented on the increase in recycling and the reductions in the residual waste, and also the work that needed to be continued in respect of improvements to air quality. He touched on the importance of the resources required going forward to tackle this issue in the district.

Members had a brief discussion in respect of housing delivery. The Director for Communities said that the year-on-year fluctuations in respect of the housing delivery cycle was dependent on what sites were completed in any given year.

The Committee discussed the consultation process and communication regarding the Local Governance Review

(LGR). Members stressed the importance of effective consultation processes, particularly in relation to the Community Governance Review.

The Leader said that the council needed to be very focussed consultations on LGR. Officers confirmed that lessons have been learned from recent consultations. Members were advised that future consultations would be well publicised and there was a new engagement platform called “Your Voice” and this was working very well.

Members talked about the decline in email feedback and the drop in the satisfaction ratings. The Director for Regeneration, Customer and Community Services said that the feedback the mechanism currently used in customer services emails would be extended to all Officers and this was expected to improve monitoring and insight into customer interactions.

Councillor Cox proposed, and Councillor Clements seconded, a motion that Members review performance over the 2025/26 year and Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend any refreshed or amended LEAF priorities to the Executive.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) Members review performance over the 2025/26 year; and

(B) Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend any refreshed or amended LEAF priorities to Executive.

13 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee Support Officer submitted the work programme report and Members were invited to consider and determine the work programme going forward.

Members were advised that not all items in the work programme had clearly defined timelines. The Committee Support Officer said that some of the content in the work programme needed to be refined with meeting dates attributed to them.

Members were reminded that a report on BEAM was being presented to the Audit and Governance Committee later in the month. Members were advised that Overview and Scrutiny Committee could still discuss BEAM if the topic was defined in more detail.

The Committee Support Officer said that the listening topic also needed to be defined with a scrutiny proposal form in terms of what the committee wanted to scrutinise and when it would be scheduled for consideration.

Members were given clarification regarding the Annual Complaints Report, with Members understanding that it relates to complaints made about and of the Council and its services.

Members were reminded that the Work Programme remained flexible, and that additional items can be brought forward at any time. The Chair emphasised that Members are encouraged to submit scrutiny proposal forms to request future items for consideration.

A concern was raised by Members regarding maintaining focus in light of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process. Members noted that anticipated changes in early 2027 were approaching quickly, and it will be important to ensure that the Committee’s work remains targeted and prioritised during this period.

Councillor Andrews proposed, and Councillor Cox seconded a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme be agreed.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme be agreed.

14 FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE

There were no items for Executive feedback.

15 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm

Chairman	....
Date	....