

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL
OFFICER REPORT TO THE FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
GOVERNANCE CLARIFICATION FOLLOWING THE RESIGNATION OF A FORMER COUNCILLOR

Date: 8 October 2026

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a factual update following comments made publicly after the resignation of a former councillor and to provide assurance regarding the Council's governance, decision-making and committee arrangements.

The report seeks to ensure that Members and residents are aware of the processes undertaken by the Council when making decisions and to clarify matters raised publicly concerning governance arrangements, committee structures and Christmas lights provision.

2. BACKGROUND

At the meeting of Full Council held on 24 September 2026, Members were informed of the resignation of a councillor who had served the Council for approximately ten years.

Following the resignation, comments were circulated publicly and subsequently reported by the local media. These comments referred to concerns regarding Council governance arrangements, decision-making processes, the former Personnel Committee and the Council's decision not to introduce Christmas lights within Chigwell Row.

Given the public nature of these comments and the Council's commitment to openness and transparency, officers considered it appropriate to provide Members with a factual account of the relevant background and information.

This report is not intended to comment upon personal views expressed by any former Member. Rather, it seeks to provide clarification regarding the Council's established processes and the matters referenced publicly.

3. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The public comments suggested that decisions were being made by a small number of individuals without being properly discussed by Full Council.

Officers do not consider this description to accurately reflect the Council's governance framework.

Chigwell Parish Council operates through a combination of Full Council meetings and duly constituted committees acting within approved Terms of Reference. Decisions are taken through established democratic processes and recorded within agendas, reports and minutes, all of which are published in accordance with statutory requirements.

Officers provide professional advice to Members through formal reports, and where appropriate the Council obtains additional specialist advice, including support from experienced local government practitioners, human resources consultants and other professional advisers.

Officers are not aware of any Council decisions having been taken outside the Council's established governance arrangements, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations or approved scheme of delegation.

4. MEMBER PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

All councillors receive agendas, reports and minutes and are afforded the same opportunity to participate in Council business.

Throughout the current council year, information relating to Council business has continued to be circulated to all Members in the normal manner.

Attendance records are publicly available and demonstrate that the former councillor was unable to attend several meetings owing to personal caring responsibilities, which were openly acknowledged within the public statement following resignation.

Officers fully recognise those circumstances and acknowledge the challenges that caring responsibilities can present.

However, it is important to note that councillors who are unable to attend meetings continue to receive agendas, reports, minutes and other Council communications to enable them to remain informed regarding Council business and decisions.

Officers are therefore satisfied that all Members have continued to have access to the information necessary to participate in and remain informed regarding Council business.

5. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Reference was made publicly to the Council no longer operating a Personnel Committee.

Members will be aware that the Council periodically reviews its governance arrangements and committee structures to ensure they remain appropriate, effective and proportionate.

Employment and staffing matters continue to be managed through established governance processes and are supported by professional officer advice and independent human resources support where appropriate.

Officers do not consider the absence of a standalone Personnel Committee to represent a deficiency in governance arrangements.

6. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS PROVISION

A significant part of the public comments related to Christmas lights provision within Chigwell Row.

Members will recall that enquiries were made regarding the possibility of extending Christmas lights provision beyond the Council's existing installation at Station Green and Brook Parade.

Investigations undertaken by officers identified several practical considerations, including the requirement for permissions from Essex County Council, the use of approved contractors, public liability insurance requirements, infrastructure availability, installation costs and application timescales.

Members were advised that estimated costs per location together with associated operational requirements.

The information requested by Members was subsequently provided to support informed consideration of the matter through the Council's democratic processes.

Whilst discussion took place regarding the potential expansion of Christmas lights provision, no recommendation was brought forward by the Community Services & Assets Committee for Full Council's consideration. Consequently, no formal proposal was before Full Council on which a resolution could be made and officers therefore undertook no further action.

It is also important to note that the Council's existing Christmas lights provision is not operated on a ward-by-ward basis. The installation at Station Green has developed over many years and is intended to serve residents across the parish.

The annual Christmas Lights Switch-On event similarly remains an event for all Chigwell residents and visitors.

7. OFFICER OBSERVATIONS

The Council benefits from a democratic structure in which Members may from time-to-time hold differing views regarding priorities, policies and spending decisions.

Such differences are both expected and healthy within local government.

However, decisions can only be implemented once they have been considered and determined through the Council's formal decision-making processes.

Having reviewed the matters raised publicly, officers have identified no evidence that decisions have been taken outside approved governance arrangements or without appropriate Member consideration.

Furthermore, officers are satisfied that information relating to the Christmas lights proposal was provided to Members to enable informed consideration of the matter.

8. CONCLUSION

The resignation of a councillor following ten years of service is regrettable and officers place on record their appreciation for that contribution to the community.

However, given the comments made following the resignation, officers considered it appropriate to provide Members with a factual update regarding the Council's governance arrangements and decision-making processes.

Having reviewed the matters raised, officers remain satisfied that Council decisions continue to be made through established democratic processes supported by officer advice, committee scrutiny and Member oversight.

The Council remains committed to the principles of transparency, accountability and good governance and will continue to publish its decisions and supporting information in accordance with statutory requirements and recognised local government practice.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. **NOTE** the contents of this report.
2. **NOTE** the clarification provided regarding the Council's governance arrangements and decision-making processes.
3. **NOTE** the factual background relating to the consideration of Christmas lights provision.
4. **NOTE** that all Council decisions continue to be made through established democratic processes in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and approved governance arrangements.
5. **CONSIDER** whether any further public communication is required.

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