

Public Document Pack

TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL

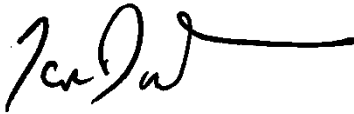
Committee Services
Room 29
Town Hall
Station Road
Clacton-on-Sea
Essex
CO15 1SE

3 March 2025

Dear Councillor

I HEREBY SUMMON YOU to attend the extraordinary meeting of the Tendring District Council to be held at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday 11 March 2025 when the business specified in the accompanying Agenda is proposed to be transacted. The meeting will be held in the Committee Room, Town Hall, Station Road, Clacton-on-Sea, CO15 1SE.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Davidson', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ian Davidson
Chief Executive

To: All members of the
Tendring District Council

TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA

For the extraordinary meeting to be held on Tuesday, 11 March 2025

Prayers

1 Apologies for Absence

The Council is asked to note any apologies for absence received from Members.

2 Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Council (Pages 3 - 18)

The Council is asked to approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the Budget and Council Tax setting meeting of the Council held on Tuesday 11 February 2025.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillors are invited to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registerable Interests of Non-Registerable Interests, and the nature of it, in relation to any item on the agenda.

4 Report of the Chief Executive - A.1 - Local Government Reorganisation (Pages 19 - 56)

This report sets out for Council an update in relation to Local Government Reorganisation, following the decision made by Council on 21 January 2025, and in readiness for the submission of an Interim Plan to Government by 21 March 2025, as formally required by the invitation from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to all Leaders of Councils in two-tier areas and Unitary Councils in Essex.

PLEASE NOTE THAT APPENDIX B TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT IS "TO FOLLOW".

Date of the Next Scheduled Meeting of the Council

Tuesday, 25 March 2025 at 7.30 pm - Town Hall, Station Road, Clacton-on-Sea, CO15 1SE

INFORMATION FOR VISITORS

PRINCES THEATRE FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

There is no alarm test scheduled for this meeting. In the event of an alarm sounding, please calmly make your way out of any of the four fire exits in the auditorium and follow the exit signs out of the building.

Please follow the instructions given by any member of staff and they will assist in leaving the building.

Please do not re-enter the building until you are advised it is safe to do so by the relevant member of staff.

The assembly point for the Princes Theatre is in the car park to the left of the front of the building as you are facing it. Your calmness and assistance is greatly appreciated.

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE AT TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Welcome to this evening's meeting of Tendring District Council.

This is an open meeting which members of the public can attend to see Councillors debating and transacting the business of the Council. However, please be aware that, unless you are included on the agenda to ask a public question, members of the public are not entitled to make any comment or take part in the meeting. You are also asked to behave in a respectful manner at all times during these meetings.

Members of the public do have the right to film or record council meetings subject to the provisions set out below:-

Rights of members of the public to film and record meetings

Under The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, which came into effect on 6 August 2014, any person is permitted to film or record any meeting of the Council, a Committee, Sub-Committee or the Cabinet, unless the public have been excluded from the meeting for the consideration of exempt or confidential business.

Members of the public also have the right to report meetings using social media (including blogging or tweeting).

The Council will provide reasonable facilities to facilitate reporting.

Public Behaviour

Any person exercising the rights set out above must not disrupt proceedings. Examples of what will be regarded as disruptive, include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Moving outside the area designated for the public;
- (2) Making excessive noise;
- (3) Intrusive lighting/flash; or
- (4) Asking a Councillor to repeat a statement.

In addition, members of the public or the public gallery should **not** be filmed as this could infringe on an individual's right to privacy, if their prior permission had not been obtained.

Any person considered being disruptive or filming the public will be requested to cease doing so by the Chairman of the meeting and may be asked to leave the meeting. A refusal by the member of the public concerned will lead to the Police being called to intervene.

Filming by the Council

This meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items, and the footage will be on the website for up to four years. The Council will seek to avoid/minimise footage of members of the public in attendance at, or participating in, the meeting.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL,
HELD ON TUESDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 2025 AT 7.30 PM
IN THE PRINCES THEATRE, TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA,
CO15 1SE**

Present:	Councillors Casey (Chairman), Davidson (Vice-Chairman), Alexander, Amos, Baker, Barrett, Barry, Bensilum, Bray (except items 111 and 112), Bush, Calver, Chapman BEM, Codling, A Cossens, M Cossens, Everett, Fairley, Fowler, Goldman, Griffiths, Guglielmi, Harris, I Henderson, J Henderson, P Honeywood, S Honeywood, Keteca, Kotz, Land, Morrison, Newton, Oxley, Placey, Platt (except items 102 - 108), Scott, Skeels Jnr., Smith, Steady, G Stephenson, M Stephenson, Sudra, Talbot, Thompson, Turner, White and Wiggins
In Attendance:	Ian Davidson (Chief Executive), Lisa Hastings (Director (Governance) & Monitoring Officer), Richard Barrett (Director (Finance and IT) & Section 151 Officer), Keith Simmons (Head of Democratic Services and Elections & Deputy Monitoring Officer), Ian Ford (Committee Services Manager), William Lodge (Communications Manager), Maddie Adger (Leadership Support Manager), Kai Aberdeen (Theatre General Manager (Technical)), Bethany Jones (Committee Services Officer), Katie Koppenaal (Committee Services Officer) and Simon Kedge (Casual Technician (Princes Theatre))

102. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER ON THE DISTRICT COUNCIL BY-ELECTION - THE BENTLEYS & FRATING WARD

The Returning Officer (Ian Davidson) reported that the result of the by-election held in The Bentleys & Frating Ward of the District on 6 February 2025 had been as follows:-

Aimee Louise Keteca	ReformUK – Changing Politics for Good	432 votes
Oli Mupenda	Labour Party	31 votes
Rachael Richards	Liberal Democrats	328 votes
Neil Robin Stock	Conservative Party Candidate	163 votes

The Returning Officer informed Council that therefore Aimee Louise Keteca had been duly elected a Councillor for The Bentleys & Frating Ward of the District of Tendring and that she had made a Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Members congratulated Councillor Keteca with a round of applause.

Council noted the foregoing.

103. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Doyle and Ferguson.

104. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

It was moved by Councillor M E Stephenson and:-

RESOLVED that the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Council held on 21 January 2025 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that she and the Section 151 Officer had circulated, by email on 5 February 2025, their annual joint guidance and advice on a number of matters relating to interests and voting on the annual budget and setting of Council Tax and, especially, the requirements of section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The Monitoring Officer read out the contents of that email as follows:-

“Tendring District Council adopted the LGA Model Members’ Code of Conduct which does not include the provisions confirming Members do not have a declarable interest which relates to the function of setting the Council Tax under the Local Government Act 1992. Therefore, to enable you to debate and vote on the budget item to set the Council Tax, this email provides all District Councillors with a dispensation under Section 33(2)(a) to (e) of the Localism Act 2011, which I will refer to at the meeting on Tuesday, and its contents will be recorded within the minutes. Consequently, you will not be required to declare an interest based on the fact you live in the District and therefore have to pay Council Tax.

However, Members are importantly reminded of section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which provides that any Member, who is in arrears by at least 2 months with their Council Tax payments cannot vote on matters concerning either the level of or administration of Council Tax. It is important to note that this also covers Council Tax liabilities outside of the district and property which may not be your main residence. If present at the meeting, a Member to whom this provision applies must disclose the fact and may speak on the item, but cannot vote. Non-compliance with this section is a criminal offence. Therefore, should this provision apply to any Member, this should be declared at the Declarations of Interest agenda item.

In 2014, the Government passed The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 making it mandatory for councils to amend their Standing Orders so as to include provisions requiring recorded votes at budget meetings. I can confirm that the Constitution reflects this requirement and the Council’s Procedure Rules state at 19.5:

“A recorded vote is mandatory on any decision relating to the budget or Council Tax. This includes not only on the substantive budget motions agreeing the budget and setting Council taxes, but also on any amendments proposed at the meeting.”

For other types of Interests, which need to be considered, Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs), Other Registerable Interests (ORIs) or Non-Registerable Interests are defined in the Code of Conduct and for DPIs & ORIs, these have been (or should have been) registered in advance, and with the exception of the Council Tax exemption for residing in the District, you should still consider if any other interests do apply. A blanket exemption/dispensation has not been applied for all.”

Councillors P B Honeywood and S A Honeywood each declared a Non Registerable Interest in relation to Agenda Item 9 (Report of the Cabinet – A.1 – Executive’s Proposals: General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2025/2026) insofar as they had a family member who was a customer of Careline. Having previously consulted the Council’s Monitoring Officer, those Councillors intended to remain in the meeting and take part in the Committee’s discussions on this agenda item.

Councillor Bray declared an Interest in relation to Agenda Item 10 (Report of the Cabinet – A.2 – Executive’s Proposals: Housing Revenue Account Budget 2025/2026) insofar as he was a housing tenant of Tendring District Council. He informed Council that he would not take part in the Council’s consideration of this item nor the voting thereon.

106. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

There were no announcements made by the Chairman of the Council on this occasion.

107. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Change in membership of the Reform UK Group

The Chief Executive formally reported that, following the meeting of the Council held on 21 January 2025 and pursuant to Regulation 9(b) of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Councillor Michael Bush had served formal notice on the Council that he wished to be treated as a member of the Reform UK political group. That notice had been duly counter signed by the Leader of the Reform UK Group (Councillor Jeff Bray).

Councillor Keteca – Membership of the Reform UK Group

The Chief Executive further formally reported that, following the by-election in The Bentleys & Frating Ward on 6 February 2025 and pursuant to Regulation 9(b) of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Councillor Aimee Keteca had served formal notice on the Council that she wished to be treated as a member of the Reform UK political group. That notice had been duly counter signed by the Leader of the Reform UK Group (Councillor Jeff Bray).

He reminded Members that, under Section 15(1)(e) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Regulation 17(c) of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, a review of the allocation of seats to political groups would be carried out. The results of that review would be reported to Council on 25 March 2025.

Devolution and LGR

The Chief Executive reported that the Government had included Greater Essex in its priority programme for Devolution and local government reorganisation. The interim plan had to be submitted by the Upper Tier Authorities to Government by 21 March 2025 with detailed proposals required by 26 September 2025.

The Essex County Council elections due to have been held in May 2025 had been held postponed until May 2026 when it was anticipated that the election for the Mayor of Greater Essex would be held.

The Chief Executive informed Council that more details would be provided at a forthcoming All Members' Briefing and that information on Devolution and LGR would be disseminated to town and parish councils and TDALC.

Council noted the foregoing.

108. STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

There were no statements made by the Leader of the Council on this occasion.

109. STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Councillor Kotz, Portfolio Holder for Assets and Community Safety

"Members in this Chamber will be aware that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex announced recently that due to budgetary pressures and an announced shortfall of £5.3million that he was proposing to cut the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) posts across the County.

The Police have been effective at reducing crime across Essex and the PCSOs have been integral to that ongoing reduction.

At the Cabinet meeting on 31 January, it was suggested that the Council write to the Commissioner of our concern of the loss of our PCSOs and how important they are in keeping our community safe.

Later that same day the Government announced £100million of extra funding for policing nationally and Essex's share of this funding is £2.3million. Subsequently, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex has said that this extra funding along with other measures will help bridge the shortfall.

A new budget has been put in place which is designed to retain PCSOs in Essex. I invite Members to note the 5.66% council tax precept increase, which equates to £13.95 million per year, put forward by the PFCC and that this along with the extra funding from Government means that PCSOs across Essex and importantly in Tendring will be retained alongside maintaining other provision.

The use of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee funding still needs to be approved by the Home Office and there is some confidence that the requirements attached to this funding will be met.

Pay constitutes 81% of the Police budget and there are some cuts proposed to staffing of non-critical roles and also to allowances. However, there will be no backfilling by front line Officers to cover any vacancies which occur.

Members will no doubt support the proposal to retain the PCSOs in Tendring who play a crucial role engaging with residents and the public, undertaking reassurance patrols and vulnerability visits. Their support at community events helps the smooth running of

activities in the District for the benefit of our population and visitors. They are invaluable in supporting the Council's Community Ambassadors and Anti-Social Behaviour Officers."

Councillor Kotz then responded to questions and points put to him by Councillors Platt, Harris and Turner.

Councillor Placey, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships

Councillor Placey reminded Members that the 9th Tendring Youth Awards were now open to nominations. Those awards spotlighted amazing accomplishments by young individuals in the age range of 5 – 21 years who lived, studied or worked in the District. Award categories covered included 'Young Lifesaver'; 'Community Improvement'; 'Environment Initiative'; and the 'Unsung Hero' for adults who supported young people. The categories recognised achievements in academics, inspirational caring, community work, and environmental efforts etc. Nominations could be for an individual or for a group and anybody could submit a nomination. Details were on the Council's website.

Councillor Placey also sought volunteers to join the committee for the Tendring Youth Awards at its AGM which would be held at the Town Hall on Tuesday 25 February at 5.30 p.m. It would be an opportunity for people to learn more about the Awards and how to get involved.

110. REPORT OF THE CABINET - A.1 - EXECUTIVE'S PROPOSALS - GENERAL FUND BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX - 2025/26

Earlier on in the meeting, as detailed under Minute 105 above, Councillors P B Honeywood and S A Honeywood had each declared a Non Registerable Interest in relation to this item insofar as they had a family member who was a customer of Careline. Having previously consulted the Council's Monitoring Officer, those Councillors remained in the meeting and took part in the Committee's discussions on this agenda item.

Further to Minute 116 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 31 January 2025, the Council considered the Executive's General Fund budget and Council Tax proposals for 2025/26.

Members noted that, as highlighted in the report to Cabinet on 31 January 2025, the following adjustments had been outstanding at that time, which had now been reviewed / finalised for inclusion within the final budget proposals as necessary:

1. recharges between the GF and HRA;
2. income from Business Rates;
3. changes emerging from the Final Local Government Finance Settlement and / or other grants / funding, which would include the final position in respect of the proposed reimbursement of the increased national insurance costs that was set out within Appendix B; and
4. any impact from proposed fees and charges.

Council was made aware that, in respect of item 3. above, the Final Local Government Finance Settlement was still awaited. A recommendation had therefore been included

within the report to enable the budget to be updated accordingly once confirmation was received.

Members were informed that the updated forecast for 2025/26, including the changes above, was set out in Appendix A. The forecast deficit for 2025/26 of £0.056m, that had been reported to Cabinet on 31 January, had been revised to an overall net surplus of £0.839m. This change had been largely due to the final figures associated with income from business rates. This had therefore negated the need to draw money down from the Forecast Risk Fund, and instead a contribution of a corresponding amount to the same fund was proposed.

It was reported that Appendices B and C set out the Net Savings and Cost Pressures respectively. Those remained unchanged from the same appendices considered by Cabinet on 31 January 2025.

Council noted that, as recommended by Cabinet on 31 January 2025, the Executive's budget proposals set out a Band D Council Tax of £199.52 in 2025/26, an increase of 2.99% (£5.79), with a Council Tax requirement of £10.674m.

Members were advised that, taking into account the changes to the budget required since Cabinet had met on 31 January 2025, the total net General Fund revenue budget for 2025/26 was £17.660m, along with a General Fund capital programme totalling £0.827m.

It was felt that the proposed contribution to the forecast risk fund in 2025/26 as highlighted above provided additional financial flexibility when looking ahead to 2026/27 and beyond.

Within that context it was acknowledged that the Council needed to maximise the time that the Forecast Risk Fund provided, to identify and deliver the necessary savings to continue to support long term financial sustainability.

Council was cognisant that the budget recommended by Cabinet for consideration by Full Council included only the District and Parish elements of the council tax rather than those from the major precepting authorities. The formal approval of the 'full' Council Tax levy for the year, including the precepts from Essex County Council, Police and Fire, was delegated to the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee which was due to meet later on during February 2025.

The Leader of the Council (Councillor M E Stephenson) made the following budget statement:-

"Chairman, Members of the Council, I would like to start by acknowledging that, while these budget speeches have historically been lengthy, I will endeavor to keep mine brief this year—much to the relief of some of you, I am sure. This meeting, as always, is about the budget for the coming year, and my goal is to allow for more time for valuable discussion on one of the most important roles we, as a Council, undertake: our responsibility for financial stewardship.

I am pleased to lead with some positive news: the budget presented tonight is not only balanced, but also includes a surplus. For the time being, this surplus will be directed into our Forecast Risk Fund, ensuring a stable financial outlook for the years ahead. Our

long-term financial planning provides us with both flexibility and security to respond to future challenges—whether these come in the form of cost pressures, structural deficits, or the delivery of our key priorities.

This budget also offers the opportunity to reflect on some of our collective achievements. As many of you know, I have consistently emphasised my focus on getting things done. This includes both continuing the important projects initiated by previous administrations and driving forward this administration's new initiatives. Some of our notable successes include:

Spendells - our flagship homeless centre that provides a much-needed roof over the heads of 30 homeless families and contributes over £200k saving per year against our homelessness cost pressure.

Honeycroft - a sheltered scheme that was delivered under budget and on time. This allowed us to look after the more vulnerable residents in Tendring whilst freeing up seven council homes for much deserving families.

Sunspot - a scheme in Jaywick Sands, a multi-million-pound, award-winning project now complete and is now fully covering its costs two years ahead of predictions.

It should also be noted that by completing these projects swiftly we have minimised the rising cost that invariably happens to projects between conception and delivery.

That is not all that has been achieved this year as there is a significant amount of projects that are progressing well that are still in the pipeline to be delivered. These include:-

- Levelling Up Fund - Carnarvon Terrace / Library in Clacton*
- Significant progress on the 15 projects within Community Regeneration Partnership Programme ('Levelling Up') which will make transformative investments in the District.*
- Capital Regeneration Project - Milton Road /Kingsway/ Victoria Street/ Harwich library.*
- Necessary improvements to the Clacton Leisure Centre and investments in local assets, ensuring our facilities meet the growing needs of residents.*
- Playzones in all of the towns in the District.*

Stewardship isn't just about counting the money and delivering exciting projects, it is also about the confidence of how we spend and getting the very best value from it and I am pleased to get a few milestones tucked away this year, and I wanted to raise two tonight;

- The first is the developing and administering of a new Social Value Policy, which will allow the way we spend our money to generate additional benefits for our communities.*
- The second is the clearing of the backlog of the Council's external audits. For the first time in years, we have a complete, signed off audit trail for the Council's finances. I'd like to thank our outstanding officers who have worked so hard with the many demands that come from not just the three outstanding audits, but also the current audit. It is a testament to them that our backlog has been cleared and our current audit is on its way to our Audit Committee as I speak.*

Our ability to secure external funding continues to be a key focus, and I'm proud to report success on this front as well. We have secured multiple strands of funding from the Government's regeneration programs and beyond, including:-

- Funding for improvements to our leisure centres from the Government's Swimming Pool Fund.*
- £500k of UKSPF money to support various initiatives District-wide on top of over £1million in previous years.*
- An additional £500k of green space funding for High Street Accelerator in Dovercourt, which includes investment for open spaced landscape improvements. This is in addition to £237k secured last year for improvements in Dovercourt.*
- £40k to fund a structural survey on the Dovercourt Leading Lights*
- £200k capacity funding Long Term Plan for Towns overseen by Clacton Town Board.*
- We're also pursuing a SALIX funding bid for over £1 million green energy solutions, aimed at replacing our ageing boilers at Clacton Leisure Centre.*

In terms of future financial management, we've been proactive. Notable actions this year include:-

- Waste, recycling, and street cleaning contract preparations to provide flexibility as decisions are made later in the year.*
- Investment in Council assets to avoid "ticking time bomb" scenarios due to neglect.*
- Setting aside £1 million for coastline management, which we hope will help leverage additional external funding.*
- Proactively managing cost pressures, such as the growing issue of homelessness, where we've allocated resources to manage the financial implications.*
- £1 million to fund a Project Delivery Unit to give much needed capacity to deliver the many ongoing projects and more may be needed if we are to complete all outstanding projects to meet the timelines set by LGR.*

Looking ahead to the proposed General Fund Budget for 2025/26, we have made careful assumptions and managed risks to ensure a balanced budget. The savings plan will continue to be an important element in helping us continue to balance the budget in future years. Savings do not necessarily mean reductions in expenditure as they can include increases in income, which is reflected within the current plan and will be something we will continue to explore going forwards – one good example being the ongoing successful management of our investments. As reflected in the savings plan, income from our treasury management activities continues to deliver a significant level of funding that remains an important part of balancing our books, with the budget for 2025/26 expecting an investment income of over £1.8 million. Unlike other councils that have proposed savings plans that are ultimately undeliverable, as shown, the savings in our plan are achievable, many of which have already been secured.

In terms of the overall net budget for 2025/26, it is now in surplus with a contribution being made to the Forecast Risk Fund rather than a contribution from it, which was the case in earlier forecasts.

This budget is supported by a 2.99% proposed increase in our share of the total council tax bill. It is always good to take the opportunity to highlight that our share of the overall bills, that will start to hit doormats in March, totals just over £199 per year for a band D property. This represents only about 10% of the overall amount payable by households and is just over 50 pence a day. I think this continues to provide excellent value for money, especially when you think of everything the Council delivers each year.

Part of stewardship is having one eye on the future and the challenges that may lie ahead and for me these come in three areas:-

The first is the BAU, the business as usual and these incorporate items such as the rise of inflation, the increase in the cost of living, which makes even more demands on council services, reduced interest rates, which will affect treasury outcomes and volatile energy costs.

The second is the Government equation. I welcomed the continued commitment to our levelling up projects, and announcements around UKSPF and right to buy receipts, alongside a commitment to a multi-year settlement which will add stability in forecast predictions. We do however need to understand the significant impact from National Insurance changes, along with potential changes in and around business rates and the new homes bonus which will impact our 2026/27 financial position.

Lastly, but by no means the least, is the Government's recent white paper on local government devolution, having a significant impact on our future financial planning. We are actively considering this new landscape and preparing our savings plans with a focus on identifying efficiencies, protecting services, and managing cost pressures.

The budget surplus for 2025/26 also provides us with some flexibility, which could be crucial in supporting the capacity required for local government reorganisation, should that occur.

However, despite these uncertainties, I am confident that the strong financial foundation we have built will enable us to navigate these challenges. This confidence is backed by the recent recognition from our External Auditor, whose independent view, after a long delay, assures us of the effectiveness of our financial stewardship.

Lastly, I want to highlight that we remain committed to supporting Town and Parish Councils. In 2025/26, we will continue to provide grant funding to offset the costs of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, ensuring that these local councils remain financially stable and able to support our communities.

To conclude, this budget represents a continued commitment to sound financial management, while also allowing us to deliver on our key priorities. By adopting this budget, we will maintain our momentum in managing resources effectively, protecting services, and planning for the future. I'm confident that with the steps we've taken, we are in a strong position to face the challenges ahead.

Chairman, I present the budget for 2025/26."

It was moved by Councillor M E Stephenson that the recommendations, as set out on page 18 of the Council Book, be approved.

In addition to Councillor Stephenson, Councillors P B Honeywood, Harris, Everett, Bray, Bush and M A Cossens addressed the Council on the subject matter of Councillor Stephenson's motion.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, as reflected within Council Procedure Rule 19.5 of the Council's Constitution, a named vote on Councillor Stephenson's motion was taken.

That vote resulted as follows:

<u>Councillors For</u>	<u>Councillors Against</u>	<u>Councillors Abstaining</u>	<u>Councillors Not Present</u>
Amos	None	Alexander	Doyle
Baker		Bray	Ferguson
Barrett		Bush	
Barry		Codling	
Bensilum		Everett	
Calver		Griffiths	
Casey		Harris	
Chapman BEM		P B Honeywood	
A I Cossens		S A Honeywood	
M A Cossens		Keteca	
Davidson		Skeels	
Fairley		Thompson	
Fowler		Turner	
Goldman			
Guglielmi			
I J Henderson			
J Henderson			
Kotz			
Land			
Morrison			
Newton			
Oxley			
Placey			
Platt			
Scott			
Smith			
Steady			
G L Stephenson			
M E Stephenson			
Sudra			
Talbot			
White			
Wiggins			

Councillor Stephenson's motion was declared **CARRIED** and it was therefore:-

RESOLVED that, having had regard to the Chief Finance Officer's (Section 151 Officer) report on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves in accordance with the requirements under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, and having taken

account of any responses to the budget consultation process, the Council approves the 2025/26 budget proposals (based on a 2.99% (£5.79) Band D council tax increase for district services) and agrees that:

- i) the total General Fund net revenue budget for 2025/26 be set at £17.660m (a council tax requirement of £10.674m excluding parish precepts);
- ii) the General Fund capital programme be approved totalling £0.827m in 2025/26;
- iii) the detailed General Fund budget for 2025/26 be as set out in Appendix D to item A.1 of the Report of the Cabinet;
- iv) the calculation of the Council's Council Tax requirement, Special Expenses and Parish/Town Council precepts, be as set out at Appendix F to item A.1 of the Report of the Cabinet;
- v) the Council Tax for District and Parish/Town Councils' services be as at Appendix I to item A.1 of the Report of the Cabinet and that these are the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of the categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands; and
- vi) if budget adjustments are required such as those necessary to reflect the Final Local Government Finance Settlement and the late notification of other external / grant funding, then in consultation with the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder, the Council's Section 151 Officer be authorised to adjust the budgets accordingly with no net impact on the overall budget or capital programme set out above.

111. REPORT OF THE CABINET - A.2 - EXECUTIVE'S PROPOSALS - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2025/26

Earlier on in the meeting, as detailed under Minute 105 above, Councillor Bray had declared an Interest in relation to this item insofar as he was a housing tenant of Tendring District Council. He thereupon withdrew from the meeting whilst Council considered this item and reached its decision thereon.

Further to Minute 119 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 31 January 2025, the Council considered the Executive's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget proposals for 2025/26 (including fees and charges, capital programme and movement in HRA balances).

Members noted that there had only been a very limited number of changes since Cabinet had met on 31 January 2025, which had been reflected in Appendices A to E as necessary. The outcome of the changes required was a reduced deficit of £1.043m in 2025/26 compared with the figure of £1.131m reported to Cabinet on 31 January. It was proposed to fund this estimated deficit by calling on money from HRA balances as an alternative to potentially reducing expenditure.

Council was made aware that, as has been the case in previous years, the use of reserves struck a necessary balance of 'protecting' the investment in tenants' homes whilst recognising the need to use reserves to respond to the on-going financial challenges that the Council continued to face. It was however recognised that this was

not a sustainable long-term solution, but it enabled the Council to meet its key priorities in the immediate term, which could be revisited as part of the HRA Business Plan in future years.

Members were aware that the above challenge was recognised within Cabinet's current initial highlight priorities for 2025/26.

It was reported that, for 2025/26, the Executive's budget proposals set out an increase in dwelling rents of 2.7% along with a total HRA expenditure budget of £18.592m (net of indirect income / expenditure) and a capital programme totalling £5.106m.

The 2.7% increase in dwelling rents resulted in an average weekly rent of £103.49 in 2025/26 (£100.89 in 2024/25).

Council was informed that Appendix C set out the proposed fees and charges for 2025/26, which broadly reflected inflationary uplifts of 2.7% where relevant or other inflationary changes to better reflect the cost of providing the associated service.

The proposed budget reflected the continued repayment of debt, with the total level of existing debt falling from £32.535m to £31.120m at the end of 2025/26.

The HRA general balance was forecast to total £2.683m at the end of 2025/26, which retained a strong financial position against which the associated HRA 30 Year Business Plan could continue to be delivered / developed.

Members recognised that the HRA balances, together with the proposed rent increase for 2025/26 were important elements of delivering a financially sustainable HRA in the longer term and that the HRA Business Plan and proposed budget played a significant role in the delivery of affordable and decent housing in the District and the Council's responsibilities as a landlord had direct implications for the Council's ability to deliver on its objectives and wider priorities. This recognised the socio-demographics of the area and the increased focus on housing standards by the Government / Social Housing Regulator.

The Leader of the Council (Councillor M E Stephenson) made the following budget statement:-

"Before I talk about the proposed budget for 2025/26, it might be worth setting the scene in terms of the underlying principle that both my administration and the previous administration have applied to the Council's important social housing landlord role.

And that is we want to make sure that as much of the rents we collect from our tenants is invested back into their homes and associated services. This continues to remain a fundamental premise of what a good social landlord should do, regardless of the social housing regulations that might require it. Good quality housing goes hand in hand with the quality of life of our tenants.

Effective Management of our tenants' homes and the support we provide them are further cornerstones of our important landlord role, that we will be judged against by both our tenants and the Regulator.

As I mentioned last year, the Council instigated its own peer review of our housing provision along with identifying additional capacity to support the work associated with this and the new era of Social Regulation. The outcome of the review was considered by our Audit Committee in April last year, where they heard how it had been a positive step in understanding the current policy and practice within the service and where further work was needed.

Set against the outcome of the review above and our key priority of providing decent housing that everyone deserves, 2024/25 has been a busy year, which has seen:

- *The initial outcomes from the stock condition surveys resulting in timely repairs and a refocusing of the housing investment programme to include energy efficiency and anti-condensation measures.*
- *The recruitment of 4 tenant engagement officers providing valuable services through tenant engagement which includes general advice, debt management and maximising opportunities to access financial support. It is our aim that we visit all of our tenants on a regular basis via this additional resource.*
- *The introduction of a number of policies such as:*
 - *A Tenant Involvement Policy*
 - *An Anti-social Behaviour Policy*
 - *A Reasonable Adjustment Policy*
 - *A Vulnerability Policy*
 - *An Acceptable Customer Behaviour Policy*
 - *A Housing Neighbourhood Management Policy*
 - *A Housing Rent Setting and Collection Policy*
 - *A Housing Allocations Policy for consultation*
 - *A Gas Safety Policy*
 - *An Electrical Safety Policy*
 - *A Fencing and Paving Policy*
 - *An Empty Homes Management Policy*

We also considered at our last Cabinet our Housing Asset Management Plan which covers a number of important elements including the management of empty properties.

I think this ably demonstrates how serious we take our landlord role and how we are always striving to improve what we do. We may not always get things right, but we are never afraid to hear what our tenants or the Regulator have to say. We can then be judged on how we respond.

As set out in the report, and similar to the General Fund, there are challenging times ahead and there will always be trade-offs in terms of balancing our aims and aspirations with the depth of our pockets. We acknowledge that the proposed use of reserves in 2025/26 and beyond is not a sustainable long-term solution, but in the more immediate term it strikes the necessary balance of 'protecting' the investment in tenants' homes and enables the Council to meet its key priorities and regulatory responsibilities.

As part of our active management of the business plan, we will need to continue to keep a watching brief on potential cost pressures and other liabilities. As recognised within the report we have in front of us tonight, along with earlier reports, the cost of

undertaking the required level of maintenance to our tenants' homes continues to rise due to inflationary pressures. We are also required to meet a set of tenant satisfaction measures and are subject to an enhanced programme of regulation from the Regulator for Social Housing. Such a challenging background to our financial planning process will naturally limit options to rationalise resources across the various lines of the forecast.

However, we need to be up to the challenge of seeking efficiencies and exploring the prioritisation of resources without compromising our underlying principles or our ability to meet regulatory requirements.

As discussed at the recent Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a good example relates to properties that may be becoming costly to maintain and repair and use up a disproportionate amount of HRA resources. It may therefore be better to dispose of such properties in order that resources can be focussed elsewhere within the HRA.

That highlights another balance we have to make – if we dispose of properties, we then need to explore opportunities to replace them.

As summarised in the report, the Government have introduced a number of helpful flexibilities around the use of right to buy receipts that should support us in this endeavour.

However, as we have said before, adding homes to our existing stock of houses does not have to come from us directly building them. We have seen a number of homes given to the Council as part of planning obligations and hopefully you have all seen the recent press release relating to the 8 new homes handed to us by Matthew Homes, relating to their site in Meadow Gardens in Clacton with 10 more to come in the near future.

In terms of rental income, which clearly plays an important role in the stability and financial sustainability of the HRA, we are proposing a rent increase of 2.7% in 2025/26 in addition to taking the necessary and effective action to continue to bring the level of void losses down to match those levels achieved before COVID.

All the things I have talked about tonight have been drawn together within our Initial Highlight Properties for 2025/26 where we have set out our commitment to developing the long term HRA 30 Year Business Plan proposals to secure sustainability of the HRA, which will include the management of long term empty council properties and responding to the Government's drive to increase the stock of social housing.

Councillor Baker and I will be undertaking a deep dive into numerous lines of the business plan, with not only a focus on managing our more difficult properties effectively, which includes any of our long-term empty homes, but also using data well to drive change and efficiency.

In terms of reserves, the estimated use of balances in 2025/26 is just over one million pounds. This has been partly offset by the estimated surplus in 2024/25 and the money that was transferred to reserves when the outturn position for 2023/24 was finalised last year. It is important to highlight that the money proposed to be drawn down from reserves is invested back into our tenants' homes.

As I mentioned last year, we remain a good landlord, and I hope tenants see their future as having their homes owned and managed by us rather than the alternative that we have seen elsewhere in the country where Councils have sold off their housing stock. That brings me to the point I referred to when I introduced the General Fund Budget earlier tonight and that is the impact from Local Government devolution and reorganisation.

Ultimately our future is not necessarily in our hands in terms of LGR, but as we discussed at our Full Council meeting last month, work will continue to ensure that the District of Tendring is in the best possible position and that Members and Officers will continue to deliver this Council's best value and other statutory duties for the benefit of its residents, businesses and communities every day that it exists, which will be applied to the HRA and our responsibilities as a social housing landlord.

The budget we are considering tonight therefore continues to provide a sound basis for us to meet the various challenges I have outlined along with continuing to deliver a well-managed and financially sustainable housing revenue account on behalf of our tenants."

In addition to Councillor Stephenson, Councillors P B Honeywood and Harris spoke on the subject matter of this item.

It was moved by Councillor M E Stephenson and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that Council approves:-

- (a) a 2.7% increase in dwelling rents in 2025/26; and
- (b) the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix B to item A.2 of the Report of the Cabinet, along with the Fees and Charges, HRA Capital Programme and the movement in HRA Balances / Reserves, as set out respectively in Appendices C to E to item A.2 of the Report of the Cabinet.

112. URGENT MATTERS FOR DEBATE

No urgent matters had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2(viii) for this meeting.

The Meeting was declared closed at 8.44 pm

Chairman

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COUNCIL

11 MARCH 2025

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report sets out for Council an update in relation to Local Government Reorganisation, following the decision made by Council on 21 January 2025, and in readiness for the submission of an Interim Plan to Government by 21 March 2025, as formally required by the invitation from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to all Leaders of Councils in two-tier areas and Unitary Councils in Essex.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the submissions by Essex County Council, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea Unitary Councils on 10 January 2025 to join the Government's new Devolution Priority Programme and committing to local government reorganisation, an announcement was made by the Deputy Prime Minister on 5 February 2025 confirming 'Greater Essex's' inclusion on the Priority Programme.

The Government has also legislated that the elections scheduled for May this year for Essex County Council and Thurrock Council would be suspended, as confirmed by the Local Authorities (Changes to Years of Ordinary Elections) (England) Order 2025.

On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution wrote to Leaders of Councils in two-tier areas and Unitary Councils in Essex, formally inviting them, together with the other council leaders in the area, to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation. The formal invitation set out further detail on the criteria against which proposals will be assessed, guidance for the development of the proposals and the timeline for this process. The formal invitation is attached as Appendix A.

Councils will be expected to submit a final proposal on Local Government Reorganisation by 26 September 2025 and the formal invitation requires an Interim Plan to be provided to Government on or before 21 March 2025, setting out progress on developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance. The level of detail that is possible at this stage may vary from place to place but the expectation is that one Interim Plan is jointly submitted by all councils in the area. It may be the case that the Interim Plan describes more than one potential proposal for the area, if there is more than one option under consideration. The invitation set out a list of matters the Interim Plan should cover as set out at (a) to (h) in Appendix A.

The Invitation stated, that the final proposals must be made by 26 September 2025, and have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to the invitation, and to any further guidance on responding to this invitation received from the Secretary of State. An authority responding to this invitation may either make its own proposal or make a proposal jointly with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

Guidance within the Schedule set out the Criteria for unitary local government (* relating to the final proposal) such as:

1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
4. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

The Interim Plan, as at Appendix B (to follow) sets out the progress made to date by Greater Essex's local authorities in developing proposals for local government reorganisation within the area. It has been developed by councils working collaboratively, both to explore new unitary structures, and the working arrangements required to enable the development of full reorganisation proposals, in the interests of local residents.

The development of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals is being led by Essex's local authority Leaders, through Greater Essex's Leaders and Chief Executives' Forum (which includes the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner). All are committed to taking forward the joint work within the context of the Nolan principles—ensuring honesty, respect, integrity, accountability, openness, objectivity, and selflessness and have begun work on a vision for change.

Four working groups of political leaders and chief officers have been established, so far, to respond to the invitation from the Minister and to ensure that we marshal the evidence to support our business case collaboratively. These working groups are focused on:

- 1) **Scale and Value for Money**, to ensure that our new structures are capable of delivering great services and securing good outcomes at best value to taxpayers.
- 2) **Quality public services**, to ensure that as we engage in the complex disaggregation and aggregation of sensitive service systems, we do so without compromising our ability to serve our residents effectively and maximise the opportunities to accelerate our transformation ambitions.
- 3) **Identity and Community**, to ensure that our new councils continue to reflect the identities and communities of our residents to support their sense of control, agency and trust in local government.
- 4) **Supporting Devolution**, to ensure that the new arrangements we put in place dovetail with the new Greater Essex Combined County Authority (GECCA) and enable us to capture the benefits of undertaking both of these fundamental change activities simultaneously.

Further working groups will be established around other priority topics as the programme develops.

At the meeting of the Essex Leaders and Chief Executive's forum on 28th February, all leaders agreed to support the Interim Plan finalised through their discussions being taken through each authority's formal governance arrangements.

Apart from initial details around the signatories to the Interim Plan, an overview of Greater Essex, the Interim Plan is structured under separate sections with the following headings:

- Section 1 – working together to develop proposals for reorganisation.
- Section 2 - working with others to develop and refine our proposals.
- Section 3 – emerging concepts for reorganisation.
- Section 4 – shaping LGR to support our devolution ambitions.
- Section 5 – the costs of mobilising change.
- Section 6 – support from government.

The response is structured covering the areas set by government but whilst each section references the relevant criteria as set out by the Minister in his formal invitation, they will not necessarily be referenced under the same headings.

All councils support the need for a robust evidence base, in accordance with the Government's criteria in order to help them decide how many unitary authorities are appropriate for Greater Essex. The evidence as to the best configuration is multi-dimensional, including:

- Financial sustainability
- Socio-demographics
- Geography (coastal, urban and rural)
- Economic corridors
- Travel corridors, such as work / home routes
- Communities and community clusters

The decision to agree the Interim Plan is an Executive Decision made by the Cabinet or Leader, although the views of all District Councillors can be sought and fed into the overall process. Through this report and the holding of the extra-ordinary meeting of Council, the views of all Councillors are being sought.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Council:

- i) notes the update on Local Government Reorganisation for Greater Essex and the formal invitation, as set out in Appendix A;**
- ii) supports the opportunity for Full Council to provide its views through debate prior to the Leader making an Executive Decision on the Interim Plan setting out progress on developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance;**
- iii) acknowledges the efforts of both the Leader and the Chief Executive in representing Tendring District Council on the development of the Interim Plan;**

- iv) subject to feedback through debate, endorses the direction of discussion on developing plans as set out in the Interim Plan, as set out in Appendix B; and
- v) welcomes the continuation of providing periodically, briefings to Members (and reports to this Council as necessary) as the agenda around devolution and local government reorganisation develops locally.

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Government’s policy position for local government reorganisation has significant implications for this Council, the residents and businesses of the District and local Town and Parish Councils and those in unparished areas. Consequently, it is appropriate to enable all District Councillors to have this opportunity to consider the policy positions and intentions for the District and provide the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive with feedback prior to an Executive Decision being made by the Leader on the Interim Plan. As referenced in the consultation section of this report, before finalised plans for local government reorganisation are submitted (in the autumn) there would be an intention to consult more widely and thereby give an opportunity for residents, businesses and Town/Parish Councils to have their say as the proposals are developed further.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Although Government encourages local authorities to work together there is nothing to stop competing proposals being submitted and, in that case, the Secretary of State can select one proposal for consultation or may consult on competing proposals before making a decision as to which is to be taken forward. However, the Invitation from the Minister (Appendix A) includes the following paragraphs, setting out a clear expectation:

“Developing proposals for reorganisation - We expect there to be different views on the best structures for an area, and indeed there may be merits to a variety of approaches. Nevertheless, it is not in council taxpayers’ interest to devote public funds and your valuable time and effort into the development of multiple proposals which unnecessarily fragment services, compete against one another, require lengthy implementation periods or which do not sufficiently address local interests and identities”.

The option of submitting an alternative Interim Plan submission was considered and discounted given the Government’s criteria as set out in the formal invitation. It was further discounted in view of the healthy collaborative working between Leaders and Chief Executives of Councils in Greater Essex on this matter.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

This Council’s Corporate Plan sets out its ambitions for the District of Tendring and the Council’s services in the period 2024-28. The Council will continue to focus on delivering the Corporate Plan for that full term or until any new Unitary Council were to replace it.

At the heart of the Corporate Plan is the vitally important role of Community Leadership. Harnessing the power of partner organisations to address the socio-economic challenges of

the District and recognise the demographics of the population locally. Maintaining this community leadership role, continuing to deliver for the communities we serve and ensuring any successor Council is equally committed to these must be our shared endeavour in this coming period.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT (including with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders where the item concerns proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework)

The local government reorganisation proposals in the White Paper would require extensive public consultation in due course. The White Paper also addressed devolution proposals and the Government has commenced consultation on those proposals for Greater Essex. These proposals centre on establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority across Essex, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea. The link to that consultation is here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/greater-essex-devolution/greater-essex-devolution-consultation>

The focus of this report related to the imperative under the Devolution Priority Programme for initial proposals for local government reorganisation in Greater Essex to be submitted to Government by 21 March 2025. The holding of the extraordinary meeting of Council and submission of this report is to facilitate the involvement of all District Councils in discussions prior to the Leader making an Executive Decision in respect of the Interim Plan set out at Appendix B (to follow).

In addition to the work being led by Council leaders, engagement has been taking place with other partners across the Greater Essex system - including senior business leaders from across the county through the Greater Essex Business Board, the Chairs and CEOs of the three integrated Health and Care Partnerships (ICPs), our local MPs and the Essex Association of Local Councils which represents the Town and Parish Council sector.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	YES/NO	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Significant effect on two or more wards <input type="checkbox"/> Involves £100,000 expenditure/income <input type="checkbox"/> Is otherwise significant for the service budget
		And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	Formal notice of the intention of determining the Council's formal response to the invitation for initial proposals for local government reorganisation was given on 25 February 2025. This notice can be accessed here: Issue details - TDC's Formal Response to Local Government Reorganisation Initial Proposals Leader cannot make decision post 28 days; therefore an exemption will be required, prior to the Executive

Part 3 – Schedule 3 - Responsibility for Executive Functions:**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (Part 3.28)**

1. The Leader of the Council is responsible for the overall operation of the Council's portfolios through effective management of their Cabinet.
2. To ensure effective communication of Cabinet business including appropriate liaison with Overview and Scrutiny.
3. To be the leading voice of the Council on all executive functions and for overall policy.
4. To be the member representative for executive functions of the Council working with the Council's partners and stakeholders, on statutory bodies, the voluntary sector, the business community and other national and local organisations.
5. Ensure that their actions are taken in accordance with Section 3 below when making formal decisions.

Local Government Reorganisation:

Local government reorganisation is governed by Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'). The Secretary of State can at any time invite proposals for unitary local government from local authorities and also has the power to direct authorities to submit proposals. The criteria against which proposals are to be judged can be set out in the invitation/direction. The law says that local authority boundaries may not cross police force boundaries but can otherwise be whatever best meets the criteria.

On 5 February 2025, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of her powers under Part 1 of the 2007 Act, formally invited any principal authority in the area of the county of Essex, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:

- Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned
- Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts
- Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas
- Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

Greater Essex would fall under Type C.

The Invitation stated, proposals must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 3:

- (1) Any proposal (*final) must be made by 26 September 2025.
- (2) In responding to this invitation an authority must have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to this invitation, and to any further guidance on responding to this invitation received from the Secretary of State.
- (3) An authority responding to this invitation may either make its own proposal or make a proposal jointly with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

Guidance within the Schedule set out the Criteria for unitary local government (* relating to the final proposal):

- A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the

establishment of a single tier of local government.

- Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
- Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
- Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
- New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
- New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

By virtue of the constitutional position in the UK, local government is created and reorganised by statute. In Essex it is unlikely that any of the 15 councils would continue to exist, and the new councils would be created in 'shadow form' the year before implementation.

The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:

The Monitoring Officer is the author of the Report. Attention, however, is drawn to the Interim Plan Submission being in direct response to the invitation from the Minister following acceptance onto the Government's Priority Programme. Further work will be required, as highlighted throughout this report and within the Interim Plan (to follow) with a number of decisions required following 21 March 2025, as more information and evidence becomes available.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Based on historic experience elsewhere in the country, there are significant costs involved in both preparing for and implementing such Local Government reforms.

The cost of preparing a detailed business case to meet the current September deadline set out within this report, is estimated to be several million pounds. Such costs primarily reflect the need for additional capacity, including consultancy and external support and advice. However, it is important to highlight that seeking financial support from the Government to meet these costs will form a key 'ask' of the Government as part of the proposed interim plan submission. Although, subject to the outcome of the Government's consideration of the interim plan and the request for financial support, if there is any shortfall in funding then this will need to be met by contributions from across the various Essex Authorities as necessary. If contributions are required by the Council, then this will be considered as necessary, either as part of future financial performance reports or as separate standalone decisions.

In terms of implementation costs, these are likely to be in the order of tens of millions of pounds for the whole of the Greater Essex Area. However, work will remain ongoing over the coming months to better inform the position, which will in turn form part of the detailed business case for submission in September. Similarly to the 'ask' of Government highlighted above, representations will be made to the Government to seek the necessary financial support and flexibilities, which will form part of the associated decision making nearer the time.

Additional financial details relating to the impact of the proposed local government reforms are set out within the interim plan referred to elsewhere in this report. Once the interim plan is finalised, further updates can be provided ahead of or directly at the meeting as necessary. As highlighted above and within an earlier report, the required preparation and implementation

activities associated with Local Government reform are significant utilising internal and external resources, which would therefore have to be balanced against the need to continue to deliver Council Services on a 'business as usual basis', as well as delivering key priorities and projects.

Significant uncertainty would also be introduced in terms of financial planning over the coming years, which would therefore introduce challenges in terms of the Council's medium term financial plans, including cost pressures, savings and investment.

Within the above context, plans will need to be put in place to address the associated risks as part of the agreed way forward.

The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:

There are no significant comments over and above those set out elsewhere in this report, although it is worth highlighting that subject to the approach agreed, it may be helpful to learn from other local government areas that have recently gone through similar reorganisation processes, which in turn would likely help mitigate risks both financially and non-financially.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	During this period, the Council will continue to apply its resources to secure the sustainability of its services to the public.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	During this period, the Council will apply its usual robust approach to decision-making and consideration of risks.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	During this period, the Council will continue to apply value for money considerations to all decisions it takes.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

Tendring District Council timelines:

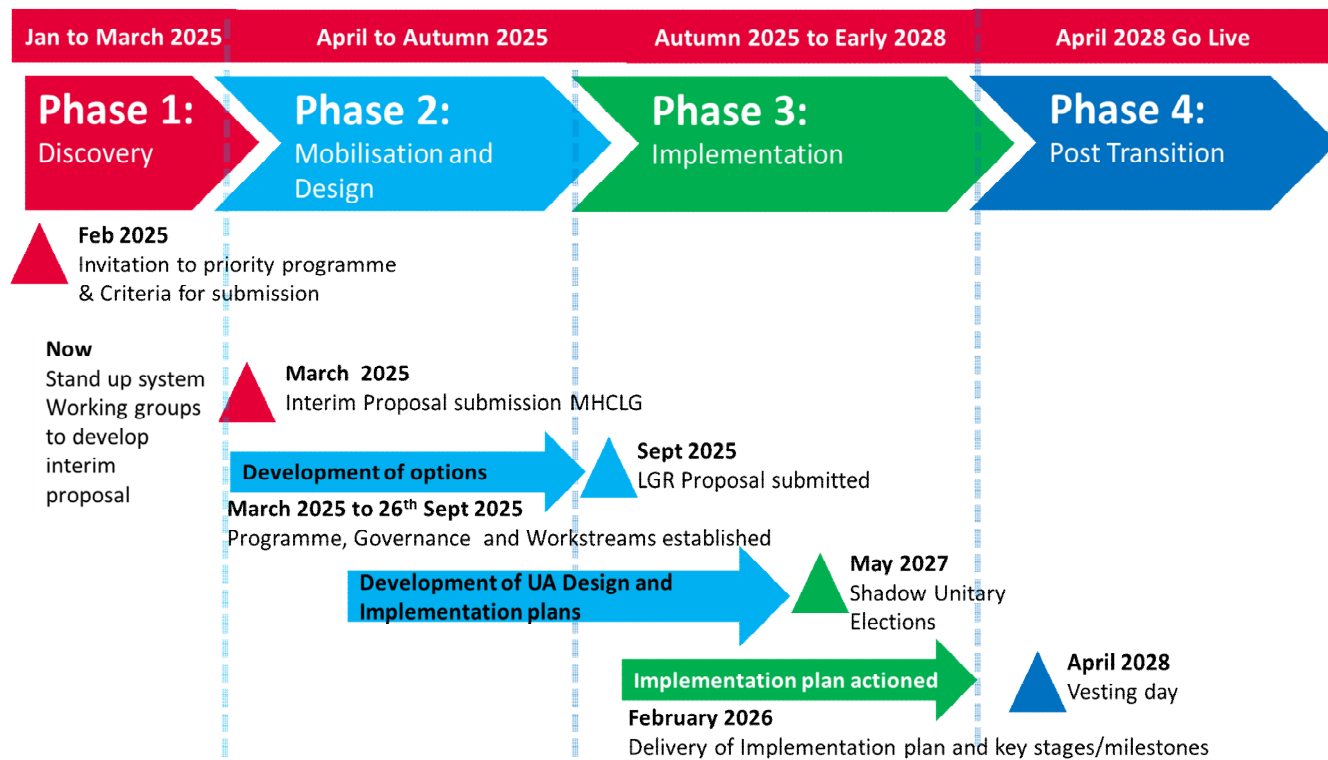
11 March 2025: Full Council to provide comments to the Leader ahead of any decision to support the Interim Plan submission on behalf of Greater Essex.

Prior to 21 March 2025: Leader produces an Executive Decision in respect of the Interim Plan submission for Greater Essex on behalf of Tendring District Council. In order to ensure that the Leader is able to act on any decision ahead of the 21 March 2025 deadline it is likely to require an exemption from call-in. This predicament arises from the wish to hold the extraordinary meeting of Council on 11 March.

MHCLG to provide feedback on the plan to help support develop final proposals.

26 September 2025 – Full plans for local government reorganisation to be submitted to Government.

It is recognised that there is more extensive and detailed work to be undertaken between now, the September submission of the full business case, and preparing for and transitioning into new Councils. The indicative timeline and high-level milestones through to April 2028 are set out below.



ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

The associated risks and mitigation for Local Government Reorganisation generally were covered in the report to Full Council in January 2025, which is included at Appendix C to this report for reference and are not repeated here.

In relation to the Interim Plan proposal, there is a risk that not all Councils within Essex will agree with its content, however this is covered elsewhere in the report, in that Government will decide what will happen in such circumstances.

Within Essex Leaders and Chief Executives, working groups have already started to map out the type of insight and evidence we will need to manage the disaggregation/aggregation of key budgets; mitigate risk, particularly across social care and education, and maintain service quality.

Government, through the invitation, has requested areas where additional support could be provided. There is an inherently high risk in a system with fifteen bodies, that the process of due diligence through to vesting day, will result in unexpected financial pressures. The Interim Plan submission will set out areas where support is required and the reasons why.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, which applies in Great Britain and requires public authorities to have due regard to certain equality considerations when exercising their functions, including making decisions. If local government reorganisation results in new Unitary Councils, the duty will apply to those.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

The Public Services (Social Value) Act came into force on 31 January 2013. It requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. If local government reorganisation results in new Unitary Councils, the requirement will apply to those.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050

In respect of devolution, one function of a Strategic Authority would be in respect of collaboration by that Authority with Government, including on the Great British Energy’s Local Power Plan and Warm Homes Plan. This in turn would influence progress with the Council’s own net zero ambition (or the policy of a future successor Unitary Council).

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

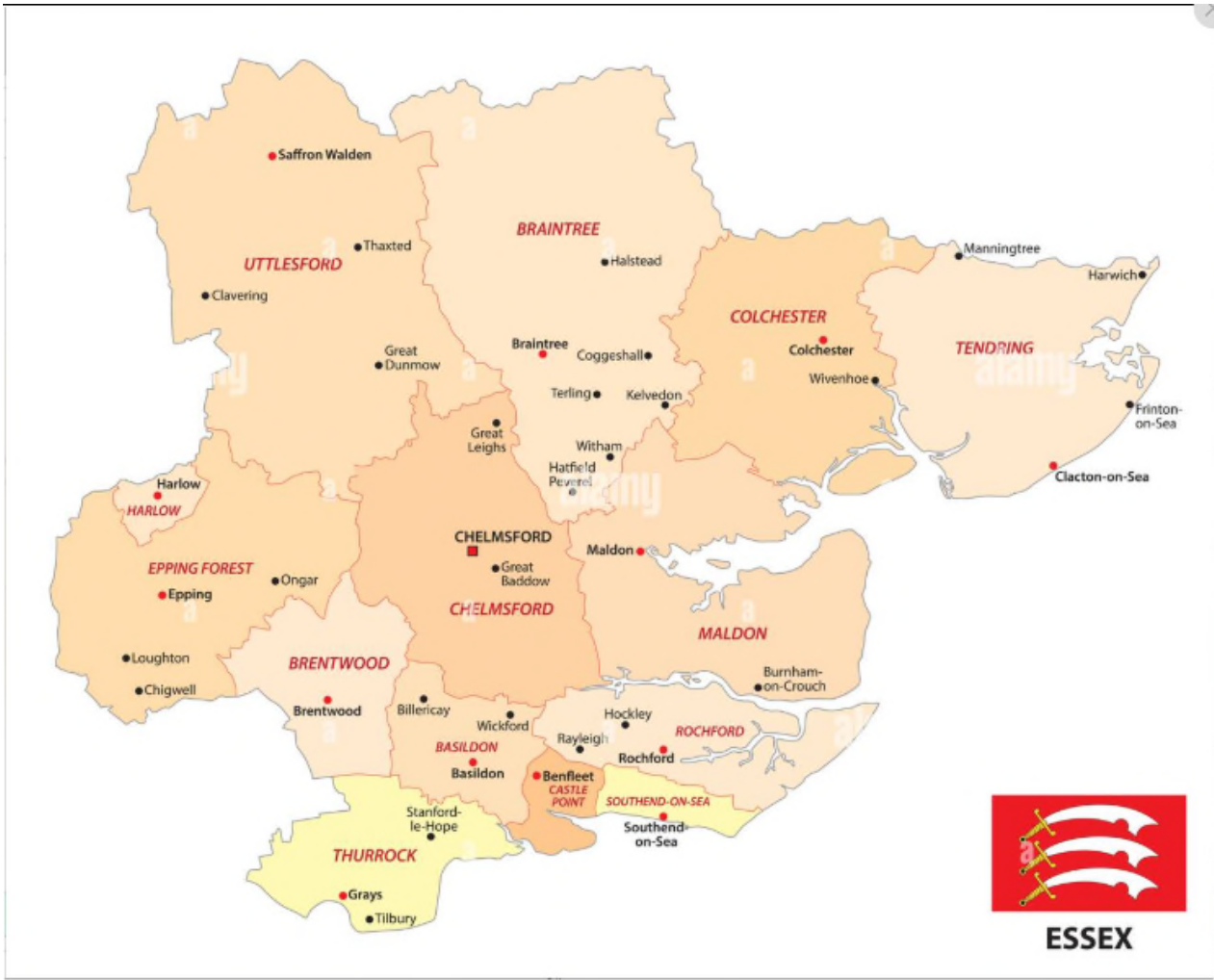
Crime and Disorder	One implication of establishing a new Mayoral-led Strategic Authority for the whole of Essex (including Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea) would likely be that Mayor’s Office would take on the role of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex Police Area.
Health Inequalities	The Interim Plan will set out how partners are working together across the area in respect of the health agenda.
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	Not applicable.
Area or Ward affected	All wards

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

At its meeting in January 2025, Council had before it a detailed report of the Chief Executive (A.1) which set out for Council a summary of the Government’s “English Devolution” White Paper published on 16 December 2024 in respect of its proposals in this policy area and the Government’s intentions for local government re-organisation; including the relevant timelines for those two separate but parallel strands of Government policy. Associated with this was the potential deferral (at that time) of elections scheduled for May 2025 to May 2026 (initially) – now confirmed through legislation. This Report is attached as **Appendix C** for ease of reference.

The area of Essex County, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea Councils is as follows:



PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

Meeting of Full Council on 21 January 2025 (Minute No. 94) it was **RESOLVED** that Council –

- i) acknowledges work will continue to ensure that the District of Tendring is in the best possible position should devolution and/or local government reorganisation go ahead;
- ii) mandates the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to seek to ensure that the voice of Tendring (and north Essex more generally) is as strong as possible in any negotiations around devolution and local government reorganisation recognising its opportunities and challenges;
- iii) recognises that Members and Officers will continue to deliver this Council’s best value and other statutory duties for the benefit of its residents, businesses and communities every day that it exists; and
- iv) welcomes the intention to provide periodically, briefings to Members (and reports to this Council as necessary) as the agenda around devolution and local government reorganisation develops locally.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

The 16 December 2024 Government White Paper on English Devolution and letter to Leaders

of Councils in two tier areas of the same date.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Formal Invitation from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution develop a proposal for local government reorganisation, setting out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed, guidance for the development of the proposals and the timeline for this process.

Appendix B – Draft Local Government Reorganisation in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock: Interim Plan - **to follow**

Appendix C – Report to Full Council on 21 January 2025 in respect of Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Name	Lisa Hastings
Job Title	Director for Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Email/Telephone	lhastings@tendringdc.gov.uk 01255 686561



**Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government**

Jim McMahon OBE MP

*Minister of State for Local Government and
English Devolution*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Your reference:

Our reference:

To: Leaders of two-tier councils and
unitary councils in Essex:

Basildon Borough Council	Harlow District Council
Braintree District Council	Maldon District Council
Brentwood Borough Council	Rochford District Council
Castle Point Borough Council	Tendring District Council
Chelmsford City Council	Uttlesford District Council
Colchester City Council	Southend-on-Sea City Council
Epping Forest District Council	Thurrock Council
Essex County Council	

5 February 2025

Dear Leaders

This Government has been clear on our vision for simpler, more sustainable, local government structures, alongside a transfer of power out of Westminster through devolution. We know that councils of all political stripes are in crisis after a decade of decline and instability. Indeed, a record number of councils asked the government for support this year to help them set their budgets.

This new government will not waste this opportunity to build empowered, simplified, resilient and sustainable local government for your area that will increase value for money for council taxpayers. Local leaders are central to our mission to deliver change for hard-working people in every corner of the country through our Plan for Change, and our councils are doing everything they can to stay afloat and provide for their communities day in, day out. The Government will work closely with you to deliver these aims to the most ambitious timeline.

I am writing to you now to formally invite you to work with other council leaders in your area to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation, and to set out further detail on the criteria, guidance for the development of proposals, and the timeline for this process. A formal invitation with guidance for the development of your proposals is attached at Annex A. This invitation sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed.

Developing proposals for reorganisation

We expect there to be different views on the best structures for an area, and indeed there may be merits to a variety of approaches. Nevertheless, it is not in council taxpayers' interest to devote public funds and your valuable time and effort into the development of multiple proposals which unnecessarily fragment services, compete against one another, require lengthy implementation periods or which do not sufficiently address local interests and identities.

The public will rightly expect us to deliver on our shared responsibility to design and implement the best local government structures for efficient and high-quality public service delivery. We therefore expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.

This will mean making every effort to work together to develop and jointly submit one proposal for unitary local government across the whole of your area. The proposal that is developed for the whole of your area may be for one or more new unitary councils and should be complementary to devolution plans. It is open to you to explore options with neighbouring councils in addition to those included in this invitation, particularly where this helps those councils to address concerns about their sustainability or limitations arising from their size or boundaries or where you are working together across a wider geography within a strategic authority.

I understand there will be some cases when it is not possible for all councils in an area to jointly develop and submit a proposal, despite their best efforts. This will not be a barrier to progress, and the Government will consider any suitable proposals submitted by the relevant local authorities.

Supporting places through change

It is essential that councils continue to deliver their business-as-usual services and duties, which remain unchanged until reorganisation is complete. This includes progress towards the Government's ambition of universal coverage of up-to-date local plans as quickly as possible. To support with capacity, I intend to provide some funds for preparing to take forward any proposal, and I will share further information later in the process.

Considering the efficiencies that are possible through reorganisation, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.

The default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils, but we acknowledge that there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices. Where that is the case, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation, and Commissioners should be engaged in these discussions. We will continue to discuss the approach that is proposed with the area.

I welcome the partnership approach that is being taken across the sector to respond to the ambitious plans set out in the White Paper. My department will continue to work closely with the Local Government Association (LGA), the District Councils Network, the County Councils Network and other local government partners to plan how best to support councils through this process. We envisage that practical support will be needed to understand and address the key thematic issues that will arise through reorganisation, including managing service impacts and opportunities for the workforce, digital and IT systems, and leadership support.

Timelines and next steps for interim plans and full proposals

We ask for an interim plan to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, in line with the guidance set out in the attached Annex. My officials will provide feedback on your plan to help support you to develop final proposals.

As your area has been successful in joining the Devolution Priority Programme, we will be working with you toward an election for the Mayor of the Strategic Authority in May 2026. To help manage these demands, I have decided to make legislation to postpone the local elections in your area from May 2025 to May 2026. My department will work with your area to take forward both devolution and reorganisation to the most ambitious timeline possible. Government will be consulting across your area in February and March on the benefits that devolution will bring, and to allow sufficient time for you to also carry out engagement necessary to develop robust and evidenced unitary proposals, I will expect any full proposal to be submitted **by 26 September**. If I decide to implement any proposal, and the necessary legislation is agreed by Parliament, we will work with you to move to elections to new 'shadow' unitary councils as soon as possible as is the usual arrangement in the process of local government reorganisation.

Following submission, I will consider any and all proposals carefully before taking decisions on how to proceed. My officials are available throughout to discuss how your reorganisation and devolution aspirations might work together and what support you think you might need to proceed.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to work together to put local government in your area on a more sustainable footing, creating simpler structures for your area that will deliver the services that local people and businesses need and deserve. As set out in the White Paper, my commitment is that clear leadership locally will be met with an active partner nationally.

I am copying this letter to council Chief Executives, and to Best Value Commissioners. I am also copying this letter to local Members of Parliament, and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,



JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007**INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS FOR A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of his powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'), hereby invites any principal authority in the area of the county of Essex, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:

- Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned
- Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts
- Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas
- Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 3:

1. Any proposal must be made by **26 September 2025**.
2. In responding to this invitation an authority must have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to this invitation, and to any further guidance on responding to this invitation received from the Secretary of State.
3. An authority responding to this invitation may either make its own proposal or make a proposal jointly with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.



F KIRWAN

A senior civil servant in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

5 February 2025

SCHEDULE

Guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals for unitary local government.

Criteria for unitary local government

- 1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.**
 - a) Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.
 - b) Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.
 - c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.
 - d) Proposals should describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these are expected to achieve the outcomes described.

- 2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.**
 - a) As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.
 - b) There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.
 - c) Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.
 - d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.
 - e) For areas covering councils that are in Best Value intervention and/or in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable.
 - f) In general, as with previous restructures, there is no proposal for council debt to be addressed centrally or written off as part of reorganisation. For areas where there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation.

3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.

- a) Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery, and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.
- b) Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.
- c) Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.

4. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

- a) It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.
- b) Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.
- c) Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.

5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

- a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.
- b) Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.
- c) Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.

6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

- a) Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.
- b) Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.

Developing proposals for unitary local government

The following matters should be taken into account in formulating a proposal:

Boundary Changes

- a) Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.
- b) There will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation.

Engagement and consultation on reorganisation

- a) We expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.
- b) For those areas where Commissioners have been appointed by the Secretary of State as part of the Best Value Intervention, their input will be important in the development of robust unitary proposals.
- c) We also expect local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament, and to ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and their representatives, and businesses on a proposal.
- d) The engagement that is undertaken should both inform the development of robust proposals and should also build a shared understanding of the improvements you expect to deliver through reorganisation.
- e) The views of other public sector providers will be crucial to understanding the best way to structure local government in your area. This will include the relevant Mayor (if you already have one), Integrated Care Board, Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Authority, local Higher Education and Further Education providers, National Park Authorities, and the voluntary and third sector.
- f) Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. This will be a completely separate process to any consultation undertaken on mayoral devolution in an area, which will be undertaken in some areas early this year, in parallel with this invitation.

Interim plans

An interim plan should be provided to Government on or before **21 March 2025**. This should set out your progress on developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance. The level of detail that is possible at this stage may vary from place to place but the expectation is that one interim plan is jointly submitted by all councils in the area. It may be the case that the interim plan describes more than one potential proposal for your area, if there is more than one option under consideration. The interim plan should:

- a) identify any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful.
- b) identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.
- c) include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.
- d) include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.
- e) include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.
- f) include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.
- g) set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.
- h) set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.

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COUNCIL

21 JANUARY 2025

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A.1 THE GOVERNMENT'S ENGLISH DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER AND LETTER TO LEADERS OF ALL TWO-TIER COUNCILS REFERENCING POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT OF 2025 ELECTIONS

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report sets out for Council a summary of the Government's English Devolution White Paper published on 16 December 2024 in respect of its proposals in this policy area and the Government's intentions for local government re-organisation; including the relevant timelines for these two separate but parallel strands of Government policy. Associated with this is the potential deferral of elections scheduled for May 2025 to May 2026 (initially).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government's "English Devolution" White Paper was published on 16 December 2024. Devolution concerns taking Whitehall powers and devolving these to more local institutions. The Government styles these local institutions as 'Strategic Authorities'. The White Paper sets out the Government's aim of universal coverage in England of Strategic Authorities – which should be a number of councils working together, covering areas that people recognise and work in. The current Combined Authorities, in places like Tees Valley and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, would become Strategic Authorities (as referred to below). The levels of Strategic Authority are stated by Government as being:

- **“Foundation Strategic Authorities:**

These include non-mayoral Combined Authorities and Combined County Authorities automatically, and any Local Authority designated as a Strategic Authority without a Mayor.”

- **Mayoral Strategic Authorities:**

The Greater London Authority, all Mayoral Combined Authorities and all Mayoral Combined County Authorities will automatically begin as Mayoral Strategic Authorities.

- **Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities:**

Those Mayoral Authorities who meet specified eligibility criteria may be designated as Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities. This unlocks further devolution, most notably an Integrated Settlement (which the Government states will mean Mayors will not be bound by strict Westminster rules over how to spend money locally). Integrated Settlements are to have a single systematised approach to spending controls and a single, streamlined, overarching assurance and accountability framework.”

The default position for Government is that Strategic Authorities should cover areas with a population of 1.5 million or above. The combined population of Essex, Thurrock and

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Southend-on-Sea is currently about 1.8million. The powers of Strategic Authorities are set out in Appendix A ('Devolution Framework Summary Table') to this report.

Mayoral Combined and Combined County Authorities can currently use a Mayoral Council Tax Precept. However, they cannot use this on their full range of functions. Government has said that it will legislate to correct this, raising the value for money of this existing power.

To take forward the intentions in the White Paper, the Government intends to introduce an English Devolution Bill. Ahead of that, it proposes to agree areas that it will determine are ready to move quickly through to the establishment of a new Strategic Authority. Those identified will join a new Devolution Priority Programme. Essex County Council, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea Unitary Councils have submitted a joint proposal to join that Programme. This would, it is proposed, see a new Strategic Authority established in April 2026 for 'Greater Essex' with an election of a directly elected Mayor for the area in May 2026. Links to the reports considered by those Councils are set out in the Background Papers section of this report below.

The White Paper does not solely address devolution matters; it also references local government reorganisation. The Government expects all two-tier areas and smaller or failing unitaries to develop proposals for reorganisation. Those existing Councils are to be replaced with new unitary councils (which the Government says should have 'as a benchmark' a population of 500,000 or more). Further to this, the report references a letter of the same date (16 December) from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to Leaders of Councils in two-tier areas (and adjoining unitary councils). This letter included proposals to postpone elections scheduled for May 2025 to May 2026 (initially) where one or other of the following scenarios exist:

- Areas who are minded-to join the Devolution Priority Programme, where they will be invited to submit reorganisation proposals to Government by Autumn 2025.
- Areas who need reorganisation to unlock devolution, where they will be invited to submit reorganisation proposals to Government by May 2025.

Locally, in the week 6-10 January 2025, Essex County, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea City Councils met separately as 'Upper Tier' Authorities to consider the separate but related matters of (1) devolution, (2) local government reorganisation and (3) whether to request deferral of elections to their respective Councils from May 2025 to May 2026 (initially). Following those meetings, the County Council, alongside Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council, are writing to the Minister to request participation in the Devolution Priority Programme (devolution and local government reorganisation), and to request the postponement of elections scheduled for May this year in the County Council and Thurrock Council areas. There are no scheduled elections to Southend-on-Sea Council for May 2025.

We will now await to hear whether Greater Essex has been accepted as part of the Priority Programme.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Council:

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- i) acknowledges work will continue to ensure that the District of Tendring is in the best possible position should devolution and/or local government reorganisation go ahead;**
- ii) mandates the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to seek to ensure that the voice of Tendring (and north Essex more generally) is as strong as possible in any negotiations around devolution and local government reorganisation recognising its opportunities and challenges;**
- iii) recognises that Members and Officers will continue to deliver this Council's best value and other statutory duties for the benefit of its residents, businesses and communities every day that it exists; and**
- iv) welcomes the intention to provide periodically, briefings to Members (and reports to this Council as necessary) as the agenda around devolution and local government reorganisation develops locally.**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Government's policy position for (1) devolution and (2) local government reorganisation has significant implications for this Council, the residents and businesses of the District and local Town and Parish Councils and those in unparished areas. Consequently, it is appropriate to enable all District Councillors to have this opportunity to consider the policy positions and intentions for the District and provide the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive with the appropriate mandate

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The option of not submitting this report was considered and discounted given the significant impact described of the Government's intentions around (1) devolution and (2) local government reorganisation and to ensure that the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council have been provided with a mandate on which they can enter discussions with other Council during the next coming months.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

This Council's Corporate Plan sets out its ambitions for the District of Tendring and the Council's services in the period 2024-28. The Council will continue to focus on delivering the Corporate Plan for that full term or until any new Unitary Council were to replace it.

At the heart of the Corporate Plan is the vitally important role of Community Leadership. Harnessing the power of partner organisations to address the socio-economic challenges of the District and recognise the demographics of the population locally. Maintaining this community leadership role, continuing to deliver for the communities we serve and ensuring any successor Council is equally committed to these must be our shared endeavour in this coming period.

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OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT (including with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders where the item concerns proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework)			
The devolution and local government reorganisation proposals in the White Paper would require extensive public consultation in due course. There was no opportunity for public engagement between the late December 2024 publication of the White Paper and the 10th January 2025 deadline for applications to Government to join a fast track Devolution Priority Programme or whether to delay the May 2025 County Council elections.			
LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)			
Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	YES/NO	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Significant effect on two or more wards <input type="checkbox"/> Involves £100,000 expenditure/income <input type="checkbox"/> Is otherwise significant for the service budget
		And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	
<p>If the decisions around (1) devolution and (2) local government reorganisation were matters for this Council they would definitely be Key Decisions. It is because the decision around devolution is one for Essex County Council (and the Unitary Councils for Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea) and central Government that this is not a Key Decision for this Council. Detailed proposals for Local Government Re-organisation affecting Tendring District Council would be a Key Decision at the appropriate time for making such a decision.</p> <p><u>Devolution:</u></p> <p>Combined county authorities are incorporated under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. They bring together a county council for a two-tier area and neighbouring unitary or county councils. They are similar to the original combined authority.</p> <p>The decision to proceed with devolution for Great Essex required the production of proposals which must be approved by Cabinets at the County Council, Thurrock and Southend). These must be the subject of consultation – consultation may be undertaken by the local authorities or by central government. The combined authority is then established by a statutory instrument.</p> <p>If reorganisation goes ahead, the combined county authority would need to be converted into a combined authority incorporated under the Local Democracy Economic Development and Regeneration Act 2009. It is clear that the English Devolution Bill will significantly impact on the law relating to devolution. The draft bill has not yet been published. The requirement to</p>			

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approve proposals means that Essex County Council, Southend and Thurrock, have direct control over devolution, although this may be changed by the Bill.

Local Government Reorganisation:

Local government reorganisation is governed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Secretary of State can at any time invite proposals for unitary local government from local authorities, and also has the power to direct authorities to submit proposals. The criteria against which proposals are to be judged can be set out in the invitation/direction. The law says that local authority boundaries may not cross police force boundaries but can otherwise be whatever best meets the criteria.

Although Government encourages local authorities to work together there is nothing to stop competing proposals being submitted and in that case the Secretary of State can select one proposal for consultation or may consult on competing proposals before making a decision as to which is to be taken forward.

It should be noted that local government reorganisation is currently controlled by central government who can reorganise local authorities against the wishes of local authorities in an area. In Essex it is unlikely that any of the 15 councils would continue to exist and the new councils would be created in 'shadow form' the year before implementation. The shadow authorities have power to recruit staff and plan for implementation but do not have any local government powers until they 'go live'. Shadow authorities would be governed by councillors elected the year before. Those councillors would become councillors of the live authorities.

Property belonging to the 15 councils will be split between the new councils by agreement or by the Secretary of State if agreement cannot be reached.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:
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The White Paper refers throughout to the need to legislate for the policy ambitions as set out, this will involve an English Devolution Bill (being the proposals for a new law, or proposals to change an existing law) being presented for debate before Parliament. A Bill can start in the Commons or the Lords and must be approved in the same form by both Houses before becoming an Act (law). The timeline for the legislation process is currently unknown.

Whilst these proposals are going through the necessary steps to become legislation and until local government reorganisation involving Tendring District Council, is confirmed, the Council will remain in place with its statutory duties, discretionary powers and services and capital programmes to deliver. Good governance will be crucial through this period and the Council is expected in the continuation of its adherence to its best value responsibilities and delivering its statutory requirements.

Whilst the decision as to whether or not to defer the County Council elections are not a district council function, Article 2 of the Constitution sets out that key roles of councillors are to represent their communities and bring their views into Council decision making processes and effectively represent the interests of their ward and of individual residents. Decisions will be made by central government and on the face of it there does not appear to be any other

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opportunities in which views of Tendring residents can be made.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Whilst the White Paper itself does not have direct financial implications on the authority, it does potentially lead to substantial change, including the potential abolition of this Council itself, which would include substantial cost in terms of preparing its smooth merger into a new unitary council.

The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:

The comment above relating to the substantial costs involved is important to repeat, which would be in terms of budgets, resources and capacity. This would need to be balanced against the need to continue to deliver Council Services on a 'business as usual basis' as well as delivering key priorities and projects.

Significant uncertainty would also be introduced in terms of financial planning over the coming years, which would therefore introduce challenges in terms of the Council's medium term financial plans, including cost pressures, savings and investment.

The above would therefore need to be acknowledged and plans put in place to address the associated risks as part of the agreed way forward.

Subject to the approach agreed, it may be helpful to learn from other local government areas that have recently gone through similar reorganisation processes, which in turn would likely help mitigate risks both financially and non-financially.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	During this period, the Council will continue to apply its resources to secure the sustainability of its services to the public.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	During this period, the Council will apply its usual robust approach to decision-making and consideration of risks.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	During this period, the Council will continue to apply value for money considerations to all decisions it takes.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

Following the publication of the white paper just before the Christmas break, the following deadlines are particularly noteworthy:

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10 January 2025 –

- (a) Deadline for County and Unitary Councils to request Government to join the Devolution Priority Programme referred to elsewhere.
- (b) Deadline to request Government to postpone May 2025 elections to May 2026 (initially) in order to provide the space and certainty to progress with (1) devolution and (2) local government reorganisation as quickly as possible.

[**Note:** Essex County, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea Councils submitted their request to join the Devolution Priority Programme and to postpone their elections.]

March 2025 – Interim plans for local government reorganisation to be submitted to Government. This may require a decision at Tendring District Council to support any proposals.

Autumn 2025 – Full plans for local government reorganisation to be submitted to Government.

1 April 2026 – New Strategic Authority established for Great Essex exercising devolved powers

May 2026 – Elections to the office of Mayor of the Strategic Authority

Tranche 1 elections to shadow new Unitary Councils established through local government re-organisation

1 April 2027 – Tranche 1 of the new Unitary Authorities come into being established through local government re-organisation

May 2027 Tranche 2: elections to shadow new Unitary Councils established through local government re-organisation

1 April 2028 Tranche 2 of the new Unitary Authorities come into being established through local government re-organisation

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

There are fewer risks associated with (1) devolution than there are with (2) local government reorganisation. Devolving powers from Whitehall to a directly elected Mayor and Strategic Authority for Greater Essex poses opportunities for harnessing those powers and aligning investment based on more local requirements than would otherwise be the case. The Leaders of the County Council and the Unitary Councils of Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea forming the decision-making body for the Strategic Authority (with the directly elected Mayor following their election) could mean there is a bias towards the south of the County initially. Local government re-organisation, with the creation of a small number of Unitary Authorities in place of the existing County, District and Unitary Councils in Greater Essex would likely rebalance the decision making to ensure the needs of the residents and businesses in the north of the County were represented in the Strategic Authority's decision-making. If this occurred in Tranche 1 (see milestones section of this report), it would from April 2027. This is because Unitary Councils across Greater Essex would replace the County and existing Unitaries in that decision-making.

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The risks of local government re-organisation revolve around the ability of the new Council to have a recognisable geography that individuals and businesses can relate to and provide it with an identity in which civic pride can flourish. Avoiding a Council that is too large to relate to, while being large enough to take on services such as adult social care and children's services will be a challenge. There is a risk that the disaggregation of the finances from the County Council into a Unitary council covering the current Tendring District could be insufficient to match the significant demands on adult social care and children's services in the area, which will need to be managed during the transition process. There will also be a need to establish new relationships with a range of partners that can place shape for the future. One set of relationships will be with Town and Parish Councils and what arrangements would be appropriate for any unparished areas given the size of the proposed new Unitary Councils. A further risk is to long-term regeneration schemes such as those in Harwich and Clacton-on-Sea. The ability of a new Unitary to retain the focus currently provided for those schemes by the existing District Council is a risk worth recognising. Related to this is the risk that the necessary attention to the needs of the communities that make up the District of Tendring will be diluted in any new unitary structure spanning several current District Councils. The challenge for Officers and Members in this period will be to continue to address the needs of the District and ensure these are given the focus they require in any new unitary.

A further risk is the potential pace of change; both in the extent to which it creates anxiety and uncertainty and impacts on recruitment and retention (and thereby capacity) to deliver everything that must be delivered by the Council in the coming period. On the basis that any new Unitary Council will still deliver the range of services that are delivered by Tendring District Council it is envisaged that many of the staff working for the Council may be transferred to the new Unitary Council (on the basis that local government reorganisation proceeds). There will be notable exceptions to this position, including senior management positions.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, which applies in Great Britain and requires public authorities to have due regard to certain equality considerations when exercising their functions, including making decisions. Any Strategic Authority introduced to exercise devolved powers would have the same requirement on it and, if local government reorganisation results in new Unitary Councils, the duty will apply to those.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

The Public Services (Social Value) Act came into force on 31 January 2013. It requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Any Strategic Authority introduced to exercise devolved powers would have the same requirement on it and, if local government reorganisation results in new Unitary Councils, the requirement will apply to those.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050

In respect of devolution, the Appendix A identifies that one function of a Strategic Authority would be in respect of collaboration by that Authority with government, including on the Great British Energy's Local Power Plan and Warm Homes Plan. This in turn would influence progress with the Council's own net zero ambition (or the policy of a future successor Unitary Council).

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS

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Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.	
Crime and Disorder	One implication of establishing a new Mayoral-led Strategic Authority for the whole of Essex (including Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea) would likely be that Mayor's Office would take on the role of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex Police Area.
Health Inequalities	In respect of the devolution element of the White Paper, Appendix A sets out that there would be a bespoke statutory health improvement and health inequalities duty for a Combined Authorities.
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	Not applicable.
Area or Ward affected	All wards

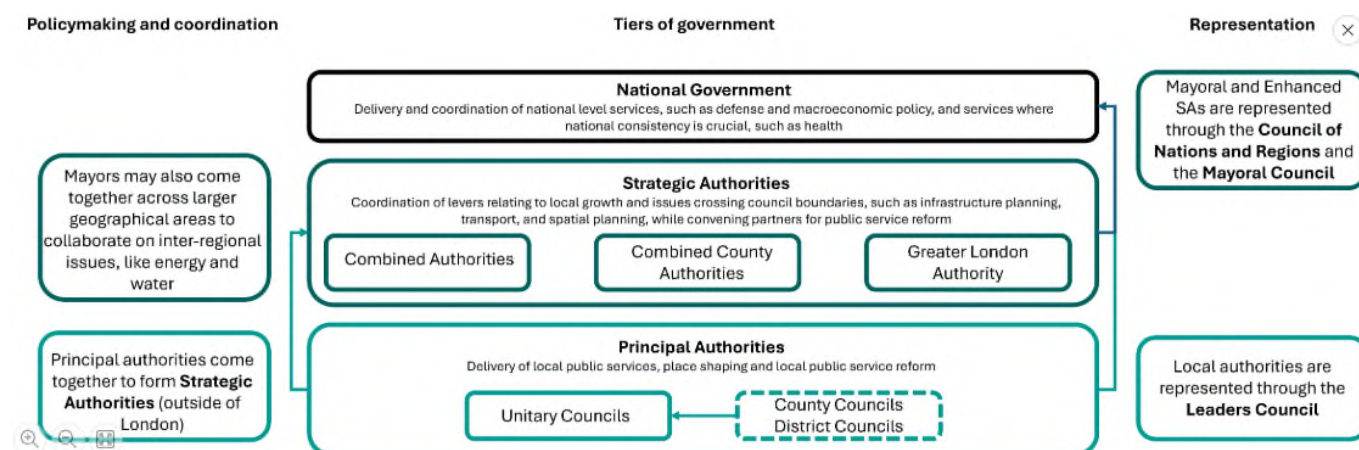
PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

December 2024 saw the publication by the Government of the White Paper on English Devolution, setting out their detailed ambitions for reform of local government structures across England. The two main elements of the White Paper focused on:

- Devolution Deals – Strategic Authorities and Directly-Elected Mayors
- Local Government Reform – i.e. merging districts, counties and small unitary councils into new, bigger unitaries

The intended model for policy making & co-ordination, tiers of government and representation going forward, as set out in the White Paper, is as follows:



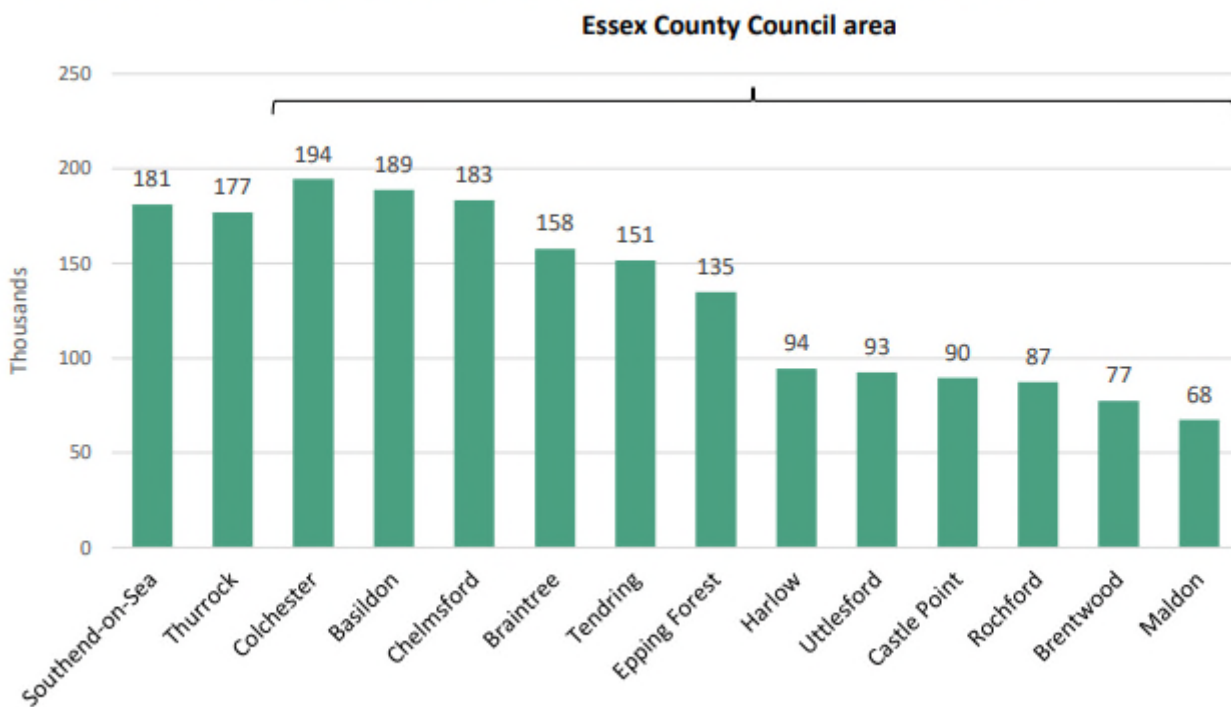
The model identifies the intention to move from two tier (County and District Councils) to Unitary

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Councils. It is already the case that less than half of England's population live in areas without a Combined Authority (taking on devolved powers from Whitehall) or where there are two tiers of principal authorities.

In thinking about local government reorganisation in Greater Essex, the following table provides population estimates from 2022 for Essex District and Unitary Councils. As stated elsewhere, the Government's stated benchmark for new Unitary Councils is a population of 500,000 or more.

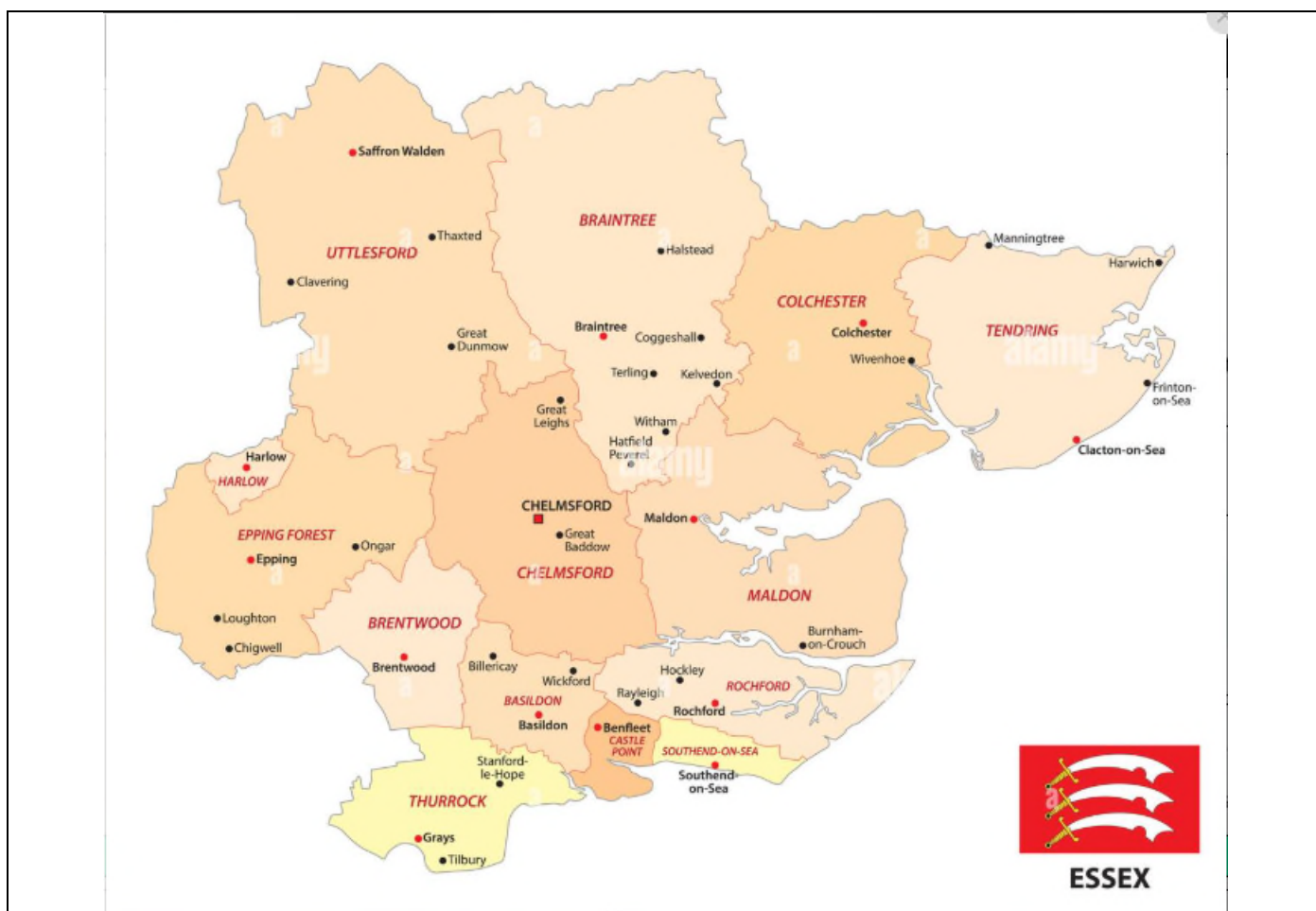
Chart PD2: Composition of Greater Essex population by borough, city and district council area, 2022



Source: Mid-year Population estimates 2022, National Statistics

The area of Essex County, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea Councils is as follows:

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Looking more broadly, it is being reported that the following County Councils are seeking approval to delay their May 2025 elections to 2026 in order to allow them to meet the tight timetable to submit local government re-organisation proposals by the autumn of 2025 and to participate in the Devolution Priority Programme to bring Strategic authorities in for April 2026:

Devon, East Sussex, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Warwickshire, West Sussex and Worcestershire.

We need to make sure we are prepared for all eventualities – including that this council may become part of a wider unitary authority at some point from 2028. As a result we are working with partners, including other local authorities, to establish what work we need to do together, to ensure we are in a strong position to serve our Tendring community, particularly due to the specific socio-demographic challenges we face here. This work will take considerable time and effort from officers – which will no doubt be beneficial regardless of the outcome – and as a result may require some re-prioritisation of where we focus time and resource.

The importance of Tendring is magnified due to our particular socio-demographics, and our community leadership role is as significant as ever; these are the principles that we need to take forward when considering and preparing for all possible outcomes from the actions triggered by the White Paper. By implication, the range of matters to be worked on include:

1. Future size of representation;
2. approach to debt;
3. the Council Tax harmonisation position;

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4. tax base needed to support Adult social care and Children’s services, particularly based on our socio demographics;
5. local challenges – focus not lost due to our coastal issues and wider challenges and opportunities;
6. not lose the key partnerships we have in place such as health, which has seen the Health Index improve and many other strides forward addressing some of the key challenges and opportunities;
7. scale of the work which will need to happen to deliver local government reorganisation – which will divert staff from priorities.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

Not applicable.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

The 16 December 2024 Government White Paper on English Devolution and letter to leaders of councils in two tier areas of the same date.

The White Paper can be accessed here –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>

Letter to Leaders of Councils in two tier areas (and neighbouring unitaries)

[Letter to Council Leaders 16 December 2024 from Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution](#)

The Local Government Association’s briefing on the content of the White Paper is available here:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/devolution-white-paper-day-factual-briefing>

In addition, the following may be of interest in considering this issue:

- [Essex County Council's Extraordinary Meeting on 10 January 2025 - Agenda and report on this matter](#)
- [Thurrock Council's Cabinet Meeting on 7 January 2025 - Agenda and report on this matter](#)
- [Southend-on-Sea Council's Extraordinary Meeting on 9 January 2025 - Agenda and report on this matter](#)

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Devolution Framework Summary Table.

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Devolution Framework summary table

Key

(**) refers to functions for which funding will be included in Integrated Settlements for Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities

(^) refers to functions which apply to Combined and Combined County Authorities only

Detail	Foundation Strategic Authorities	Mayoral Strategic Authorities	Established Strategic Authorities
Funding and investment			
Access to a multi-departmental, long-term integrated funding settlement**			X
Long-term investment fund, with an agreed annual allocation		X	X
Removal of gateway review from investment fund, after Gateway One complete			X
Ability to introduce mayoral precepting on council tax^		X	X
Consolidation of local growth and place funding in a single pot**	X	X	X
Strategic leadership			
A statutory duty to produce Local Growth Plans		X	X
Membership of the Council of Nations and Regions		X	X
Membership of the Mayoral Data Council		X	X
Transport and local infrastructure			
Local Transport Authority and public transport functions, including bus franchising and responsibility for an area-wide Local Transport Plan	X	X	X

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Detail	Foundation Strategic Authorities	Mayoral Strategic Authorities	Established Strategic Authorities
Simplification and consolidation of local transport funding**	X	X	X
Removal of certain Secretary of State consents, e.g. on lane rental schemes		X	X
Duty to establish a Key Route Network on the most important local roads^		X	X
Mayoral Power of Direction over use of constituent authority powers on the Key Route Network^		X	X
Priority for strategic rail engagement (including mayoral partnerships) with Great British Railways	X	X	X
Statutory role in governing, managing, planning, and developing the rail network		X	X
An option for greater control over local rail stations		X	X
A 'right to request' further rail devolution			X
Priority for support to deliver multi-modal ticketing			X
A clear, strategic role in the decarbonisation of the local bus fleet	X	X	X
Active Travel England support for constituent authority capability^	X	X	X
Formal partnership with National Highways		X	X
Skills and employment support			
Joint ownership of the Local Skills Improvement Plan model, with Employer Representative Bodies	X	X	X
Devolution of the core Adult Skills Fund	X		

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Detail	Foundation Strategic Authorities	Mayoral Strategic Authorities	Established Strategic Authorities
Devolution of non-apprenticeship adult skills functions through a consolidated skills funding pot**		X	X
Central convening of youth careers provision including greater flexibility for Careers hubs		X	X
A clear role in relation to 16-19 education and training		X	X
Responsibility for developing local Get Britain Working Plans	X	X	X
Devolution of supported employment funding**	X	X	X
Co-design of future employment support that is additional to core Jobcentre Plus provision		X	X
Delegated delivery or commissioning of employment support that is additional to core Jobcentre Plus provision			X
Alignment of Jobcentre Plus boundaries with Strategic Authorities			X
Housing and strategic planning			
A duty to produce a Spatial Development Strategy	X	X	X
Strategic development management powers (once the Spatial Development Strategy is in place)		X	X
Ability to raise a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy to fund strategic infrastructure (once the Spatial Development Strategy is in place)		X	X
Ability to make Mayoral Development Orders		X	X

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Detail	Foundation Strategic Authorities	Mayoral Strategic Authorities	Established Strategic Authorities
Ability to establish Mayoral Development Corporations		X	X
Homes England compulsory purchase powers (held concurrently)	X	X	X
Devolution of wider grant funding to support regeneration and housing delivery**		X	X
Ability to set the strategic direction of any future programme to support affordable housing provision in their area			X
Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England		X	X
Support to establish a public sector land commission			X
Economic development and regeneration			
Partnership working with Department for Science, Industry and Technology and UK Research and Innovation to explore opportunities for closer long-term collaboration in strengthening local research and innovation capacity	X	X	X
Develop joint innovation action plans with Innovate UK to shape long-term strategies and investments		X	X
Embed UK Research and Innovation lead points of contact for enhanced collaborative working on innovation with Mayoral Strategic Authorities that are committed to work collaboratively on innovation		X	X
Responsibility as the accountable body for the delivery of Growth Hubs	X	X	X
Devolution of Growth Hubs funding**			X
A Strategic Partnership with the Department		X	X

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Detail	Foundation Strategic Authorities	Mayoral Strategic Authorities	Established Strategic Authorities
for Business and Trade focused on domestic growth, exports, investment, and delivery of local growth priorities.			
Partnership working with Department for Culture, Media and Sport Arm's Length Bodies to maximise culture, heritage, and sport spending in place	X	X	X
Environment and climate change			
Devolution of retrofit funding this parliament subject to a successful transition period (see 3.7)**			X
Heat network zoning coordination role	X	X	X
Coordinating local energy planning to support development of regional network energy infrastructure	X	X	X
Green jobs and skills coordination role	X	X	X
A strategic role on net zero in collaboration with government, including on Great British Energy's Local Power Plan and Warm Homes Plan	X	X	X
Responsibility for coordinating delivery and monitoring of Local Nature Recovery Strategies^	X	X	X
Health, wellbeing and public service reform			
A bespoke statutory health improvement and health inequalities duty^	X	X	X
Mayors engaged during the Integrated Care Boards chair appointment process		X	X
Mayors as members of local Integrated Care Partnerships, and consideration for position of chair or co-chair		X	X

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Detail	Foundation Strategic Authorities	Mayoral Strategic Authorities	Established Strategic Authorities
A role in convening partners and driving cross-cutting public service reform, including looking at areas such as multiple disadvantage	X	X	X
Public safety			
Mayors accountable for the exercise of Police and Crime Commissioner functions where police force and mayoral boundaries align^		X	X
Mayors accountable for the exercise of Fire and Rescue Authority functions where fire and rescue service and mayoral boundaries align		X	X
A clear and defined role in local resilience, working with the Local Resilience Forum to embed resilience into broader policy and delivery^	X	X	X