



**REPORT of
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**to
ANNUAL COUNCIL
14 MAY 2026**

DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That Members approve the response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) questions as set out from paragraphs 3.3 to 3.5 below;
- (ii) That in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chairperson of the LGR Working Group delegation is given to the Chief Executive to agree any amendments or to provide further information to MHCLG in relation to the information required to draft the Structural Change Order (SCO);
- (iii) That Members note the wider update around Devolution and LGR.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 It was announced on 25 March 2026 that the Government supported the Five Unitary business case, this was the business case supported by ten district council including Maldon District Council for Essex.

3.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has requested further information to inform the draft Structural Change Order (SCO) which must be supplied by 29 May 2026 namely:

- details of proposed warding arrangements
- Returning Officer for the elections to Mid Essex Authority
- details of Parish Council election harmonisation

- 3.3 **Warding Arrangements** - Officers have undertaken a review of the warding arrangements in line with the Boundary Commission guidelines. The proposed warding arrangement are as follows:

Existing District Wards	Electorate 06.2025	New Ward Total	Member / 3000	No. Cllrs (new)	Name of New Ward
Althorne	3559	6581	1.19	2	The Crouch Valley
Purleigh	3022		1.01		
Burnham on Crouch North	4231	7552	1.41	2	Burnham on Crouch
Burnham on Crouch South	3321		1.11		
Mayland	3400	8106	1.13	3	The Dengie Villages
Tillingham	1132		0.38		
Southminster	3574		1.19		
Tollesbury	2327	5750	0.78	2	Tollesbury and Tolleshunts
Tolleshunt Darcy	3423		1.14		
Heybridge East	3262	6773	1.09	2	Heybridge
Heybridge West	3511		1.17		
Maldon North	3406	5221	0.61	2	Maldon North East
Maldon East	1815		1.02		
Maldon South	3073	7257	1.14	2	Maldon South West
Maldon West	4184		1.39		
Great Totham	3159	6270	1.05	2	Maldon Rural North
Wickham Bishops & Woodham	3111		1.04		
		53510		17	

- 3.4 **Returning Officer** - The Returning Officer for the Mid Essex will be the Chief Executive of Chelmsford City Council.
- 3.5 **Parish Council Election Harmonisation** - This position has not been agreed by all authorities, but this is the current proposal for Parish Council harmonisation.

Proposal Parish/Town Council Elections

Ordinary year of elections	Ordinary End of term	Other elections we anticipate on election day that year	Proposal
2026	2040	Current council elections	Parish elections are already going ahead anyway, with a term of 4 years, but term should subsequently be extended to 6 years.
2027	2031	Shadow elections everywhere	Parish elections due to take place should go ahead, but term extended to 5 years.
2028	2032	Mayoral election	Parish elections due to take place should go ahead. No extension necessary
2029	2033	None – though General election is due by July 2029.	Parish elections should go ahead (if any) but with a three year term.
2030	2034	None	Parish elections should be postponed and term of those elected in 2026 extended to six years.
2031	2035	None	Parish elections should be postponed and term of those extended in 2027 extended to five years.
2032	2036	Unitary elections	All parish council elections take place this year

- 3.6 In addition to these discussions, officers have been working with others at Essex County Council, Chelmsford City Council and Brentwood District Council around implementation delivery planning, and this work is progressing.
- 3.7 Each new unitary area will be supported by a Joint Committee to take early implementation decisions. Membership is expected to be split 50/50 between the county and the districts/boroughs in West, North East, and Mid Essex; and 50/50

between existing unitaries and county/district/boroughs in South West and South East. Alongside this, there will be a single officer Implementation Team led by the Essex County Council Chief Executive, supported by deputy leads from each new unitary area. Government also notes that preparatory work can continue during the pre-election sensitivity period.

3.8 Looking further ahead, all-out elections for the new councils are planned for May 2027, with members serving five-year terms through to 2032.

3.9 On Devolution, there has been no progress in this area.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Draft MHCLG responses are provided for Council approval, along with an update on the work around devolution and LGR.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

5.1 Supporting our communities

5.1.1 Good engagement with the Devolution and LGR process will ensure the best representation for our local residents.

5.2 Delivering good quality services

5.2.1 Good engagement with the Devolution and LGR process will deliver the best services possible in the new Mid Essex unitary.

6. IMPLICATIONS

(i) **Impact on Customers** – None.

(ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.

(iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – Engagement with this work reduces our Corporate Risk around Failing to be prepared for Devolution and LGR.

(iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None.

(v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None.

(vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** - The recommendations in this report are specifically around LGR implementation.

Background Papers: None.

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