



REPORT of CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**to
COUNCIL
22 OCTOBER 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) activity, including information on Maldon District Council spend to date.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Council receives the update on Devolution and LGR activity, and costs that are confirmed so far as set out below.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 An update on Devolution and LGR has been provided to the Council since early activity started in 2025. Since March 2026, this has included an update of how we were progressing on the delivery of Mid Essex following the government decision of the five unitary model.
- 3.2 **Local Government Reorganisation**
- 3.2.1 On 7 September 2026, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced a withdrawal of the five unitary model decision for Essex, followed by a pause and review of LGR.
- 3.2.2 Mid Essex programme activity, which had been starting to mobilise, including service specific officer working groups has all been paused, and the Mid Essex Project Management Office (PMO) is working through an 'organised closure'.
- 3.2.3 The Mid Essex PMO is currently finalising the costs associated with the Mid Essex Programme. At the point of the 'pause' announcement, work had been commissioned to help set up the Mid Essex LGR programme and plan its delivery. Costs incurred between the announcement of the preferred five unitary model and the announcement of the 'pause' are estimated at £78,000. The share attributable to Maldon District Council is expected to be one third of the total (£26,000). The final figure and the basis of apportionment will be confirmed by the Mid Essex Programme Board on 5 November 2026. These costs incurred include some IT investment, a Member engagement event, staff support, and specialist external project management.
- 3.2.4 There are no specific officer posts to date that have been recruited specifically for LGR. Officers working on LGR delivery had been doing so by diverting time from other tasks. The leadership team note that many of the activities carried out have

also been best practice for the organisation, for example making sure our data for key processes is updated.

3.2.5 A number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests have been received concerning the financial cost of LGR implementation so far. The information was not provided at the time under the exemption of S22 Freedom of Information Act. S22 states that information is exempt where the information is intended for future publication, which this report satisfies.

3.2.6 We are still waiting on confirmation whether there are any Essex system costs to apportion.

3.3 Devolution

3.3.1 Work on devolution for Greater Essex remains separate from the Local Government Reorganisation process. The Government previously confirmed that Greater Essex had met the statutory tests to proceed with establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority, covering Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

3.3.2 The first Greater Essex mayoral election, originally planned for May 2026, has been deferred to May 2028. This is intended to allow further time for the new Strategic Authority arrangements to be developed. Councils across Greater Essex remain committed to progressing devolution and securing opportunities for additional powers, funding and investment in areas such as economic growth, transport, skills, housing and infrastructure.

3.3.3 At the time of writing, no further change to the Greater Essex devolution programme has been confirmed following the Government's announcement on 7 September 2026 regarding the review of Local Government Reorganisation. Officers will continue to monitor national developments and assess any implications for the proposed Strategic Authority and Maldon District.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The update and financial information is provided for clarity on the Devolution and LGR impact at Maldon District Council.

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

5.1 None.

6. IMPLICATIONS

(i) **Impact on Customers** – None.

(ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.

(iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – None.

(iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – There are costs as identified so far, but these are minimal in the impact of Maldon District Council's overall budget.

- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – The LGR pause will mean other work such as elections and legislative changes need to be revisited by officers.
- (vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** – The programme is paused and change to timescales etc will be revisited based on any further information received.

Background Papers: None.

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