

ECC Report October 2025

Three unitary council proposal to be submitted to government



Our Proposal for Greater Essex was approved by Full Council for consideration by the Government. This is our ambitious vision for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Greater Essex.

The proposal was debated by our Cabinet and all Essex County Council Members during extraordinary meetings held on Thursday 18th September.

Following the debate, Full Council and Cabinet proceeded to approve the proposal. This has now been submitted to Government on Friday 26th September.

Leader of the council, Councillor Kevin Bentley, said the approval of the proposal marked "a moment in history".

He said during Full Council: “This is a momentous day in the life of Essex County Council, what remains in the life of Essex County Council, all the district councils as we know them and unitary councils in Essex.

“It’s no secret I have been a long proponent of Local Government Reorganisation and indeed introducing a Mayor.

“I personally believe, and know many people in this room believe, that this is the best future for the residents of Essex, the way we run local government and the way we secure funding and investment in the future.”

Other councils in Greater Essex have developed three different proposals based on four and five unitary councils, and all of these have been submitted alongside our preferred option under one joint letter to Government.

However, we have used extensive evidence to inform our proposal. This evidence points to fewer councils being able to achieve the greatest benefits.

The Proposal for Greater Essex has resident priorities at its heart. It also ensures the new councils will be financially sustainable and fit for the future.

The Government will review them and decide which proposal, or proposals, will be put forward to public consultation. This consultation is expected to launch in the autumn. It will give residents the opportunity to have their say on the future of local government.

The government is expected to respond to Essex, Southend, and Thurrock Council with a final decision in early March 2026.

Read the [Proposal for Greater Essex](#).

Find out more about [LGR in Greater Essex](#).

Welcoming calls to put community at the heart of LGR



We have welcomed a statement from community groups calling for community to be at the heart of plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The statement has been endorsed by leaders from across the Essex Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector. It sets out how LGR is an opportunity to unlock the potential of communities.

Coordinated by the [Essex Community Foundation \(ECF\)](#), it outlines five practical principles. These include local government that reflects communities, a formal role for the sector in governance and long-term investment in place-based support.

Councillor Kevin Bentley, Leader of Essex County Council, said: “We are pleased to see such a strong and unified voice from Essex’s voluntary and community sector. The sector plays a vital role in Essex, delivering over £1 billion in added value and bringing

together more than 17,500 staff and 95,000 volunteers across the county.

“We fully support the principles set out in the joint statement and as we move forward, we will continue working with the VCFSE sector to create a stronger, fairer Essex, where decisions are made closer to the people they affect.

“Our own proposal for LGR, published on Wednesday 10 September, reflects these principles. In it, we have committed to long-term investment in place-based support, helping to champion community-led solutions and ensuring local people have a strong voice in their own future.”

Read the [full statement](#) on the ECF website.

Find out more about [LGR in Greater Essex](#).

Applications open for secondary school places in Essex



If your child is starting secondary school in September 2026, it is time to apply for their Year 7 place now.

You can [apply online](#) from 12 September to 31 October and find out about different schools [on the website](#).

When submitting your application, you should:

- visit your preferred school
- consider each school's admissions criteria
- consider how your child will get to and from school
- use all six preferences on your application

Why applying on time matters

31 October is a national deadline. Applications sent after this date will only be seen after all on-time applications have been determined.

Applying before the deadline means your child is less likely to get a place at one of your preferred schools.

Councillor Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability, said:

“Parents of Year 6 students across Essex are now able to submit their applications for secondary school places and I would urge them to do so before the national closing date of 31 October.

“We’re keen to maintain our excellent record of securing preferred places for Year 7 pupils in Essex, but we can only do this if parents complete their child’s secondary school place application correctly and by the deadline.”

Sign up to host a health check station at your business



Earlier this year we launched a digital health check scheme for workers in Essex, and we started in the south of the county and set up stations in 23 businesses across Basildon and Brentwood.

More businesses are now being invited to [register their interest](#) to host a station, as we would like this scheme to be in place for the entire county.

The self-serve stations help users check blood pressure, heart rate, BMI, stress levels, and more in minutes.

The goal is to help people detect early signs of health risks like high blood pressure, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

The units also signpost to free support and advice from:

- the Essex Wellbeing Service
- the Community Pharmacy
- a local GP.

One business to have benefitted so far is Baker Labels in Brentwood. Steve Baker, Managing Director said:

“The digital health checks have been incredibly well received by our team. It’s a simple, quick way to check overall health and supports our commitment to a healthy workplace.”

Councillor John Spence, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health and Integration recently visited Baker Labels to see the health checks in action.

Councillor Spence said: “Healthy workforces are happy and competitive workforces. Businesses that sign up to this scheme are truly enlightened. Baker Labels is a shining example of how investing in staff wellbeing boosts productivity and reduces health inequalities.”

The scheme is part of our Workplace Health Programme and is now expanding across the county.

Businesses can host a station for up to four weeks, giving staff easy access to health checks without needing a GP appointment.

Sign up [online](#) or [email](#) to register your interest.

Student construction careers programme up for major awards



Building a Lasting Legacy is helping students learn about careers in construction. Now, it has been shortlisted for two big awards:

- *Excellence in Construction Skills* at the Essex Housing Awards
- *Delivering Sustainability and Social Value* at the CIPFA Public Finance Awards

The programme has already given over 100 Year 9 pupils hands-on experience in trades. This includes carpentry, plumbing, digital design and civil engineering.

The project will continue supporting students through to Year 13. This will include regular mentoring, skills development and career advice.

Building a Lasting Legacy complements our Essex Year of Opportunity. This campaign works with businesses to help all ages learn useful skills and find jobs. So far, it has resulted in:

- [A free directory](#) of courses, certificates and resources
- [A speech-recognition app](#) to help children with reading and speaking
- [A scheme](#) where businesses donate old tech to help people get online

Morgan Sindall Construction is also supporting the Essex Year of Opportunity. It will introduce primary school pupils to construction careers, sparking interest early on.

Building a Lasting Legacy is run by Essex County Council and supported by:

- Morgan Sindall Construction
- Greater Essex Careers Hub
- Chelmsford College
- Anglia Ruskin University

Several local schools and construction companies also help make it a success.

Helen Clements, Senior Social Value Manager at Morgan Sindall Construction, said: “During the Building a Lasting Legacy programme’s inaugural year, we’ve seen first-hand how vital this support and investment is for young people within our communities. For example, some of the pupils have found mainstream education difficult but have really engaged with the programme and are now on a path to further mentorship, experience, and opportunities in the future.”

Councillor Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability, said: “Being shortlisted for two awards is a fantastic endorsement of the Building a Lasting Legacy programme. It shows how powerful collaboration between education and industry can be in opening real career pathways for young people. The enthusiasm and progress we’ve seen from students in just the first year is inspiring, and it’s only the beginning.

“Building a Lasting Legacy also supports the Essex Year of Opportunity campaign, which is helping open doors to work and education through local partnerships. Essex is an ambitious and innovative county, but it only thrives when its people thrive. Residents of all ages should have endless opportunities to expand their skills and follow their passions without barriers.”

Councillor Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities, Economic Growth and Prosperity, added: “It is great that so many local businesses are actively supporting young people through this programme. Being shortlisted for these awards is testament to the collaborative spirit and long-term vision behind the Building a Lasting Legacy programme.”

[Watch the Year 1 Celebration Video](#) to learn more about Building a Lasting Legacy.

[Find out more about the Essex Year of Opportunity online.](#)

Essex Year of Opportunity backed by over £1 million



We are putting £1.33 million into smashing barriers to work and learning for all ages.

This is the Essex Year of Opportunity. It involves projects and partnerships with businesses to help residents learn essential skills.

It links to the Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan we built with employers. They told us recruiting skilled workers is a top priority.

The new funding will support:

- meaningful employer engagements with 36,000 children
- training more teachers to support career readiness
- 535 more adults into employment
- 350 more people to start apprenticeships, up from 400 per year

- 100,000 meaningful interactions between residents and employers in key growth sectors
- the number of businesses confident in recruiting skilled staff

The Essex Year of Opportunity has so far resulted in:

- [a directory](#) of free courses, certificates, resources and skills hubs for residents
- [a speech-recognition app](#) helping children develop skills throughout the Summer Reading Challenge
- [a charter](#) enabling businesses to donate used electronics, helping residents get online
- [a free support programme](#) for those not currently in work and facing barriers

Councillor Tony Ball, our Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong learning and Employability, said: “Essex is an ambitious and innovative county, but it only thrives when its people thrive. Residents of all ages should have endless opportunities to expand their skills and follow their passions without barriers.

“Essex is one of the largest areas in England. It has a population of over 1.8 million people, of which 62.2% are working age.

“Bridging the skills gap will not only enrich the lives of individuals – it will help create a thriving economy where businesses can feel confident about hiring skilled workers. I look forward to seeing more projects and partnerships from the Essex Year of Opportunity over the coming months.”