

**GREATER ESSEX**  
**DEVOLUTION: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**  
**24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

**Section 1: Why do we want a Devolution Deal: Summary**

Greater Essex<sup>1</sup> is a dynamic, thriving, entrepreneurial and creative region with the potential to outpace the economic growth of other parts of the country. We see devolution as the key to helping us punch our weight and unlock that growth for the benefit of our residents and for the UK as a whole.

Over the past century, hundreds of thousands of people have come to Greater Essex to improve their lives. People have moved here to enjoy the quality of life offered in our villages, towns and cities, and to grasp new economic opportunities. While there is no single Greater Essex character, most of the 1.9m people who live in the area are here because they or their parents saw opportunity and seized it.

Greater Essex's hard-working residents have built up the area's economic position and have reaped their just rewards. Economic output in Greater Essex is similar in scale to that of Northern Ireland at c.£47bn per year. The region is home to c.81,000 businesses, including some of the best known and most innovative companies in the world, employing more than 700,000 people. We have a history of low unemployment and average incomes exceed national and regional benchmarks. Leaders across Greater Essex today – whether in parliament, local government, wider public service or in business – share this same ambition and drive.

We have significant assets and opportunities that a devolution deal will help us capitalise on. We are a gateway to trade and investment with two international airports (Stansted and Southend) and two Freeports – Thames Freeport and Freeport East (Harwich); as well as being well connected to London, Cambridge and the M11 corridor. We are part of the government-appointed Thames Estuary Growth Board, working with the Envoy, the private sector led board to secure commercial investment in this world famous river. We have the opportunity to build on our assets to accelerate the pace of growth in key sectors of our economy (construction and retrofit; clean energy; advanced manufacturing; digitech; life sciences) to the tune of 50,000 additional jobs by 2030. And we have a strategy ready to implement this.

We have world class businesses with whom we have excellent relationships – including Manchester Airport Group and DP World on logistics; Ford, Raytheon and Teledyne on advanced manufacturing; Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult for life sciences; Kao Data and Global Marine Systems on digitech.

We have three universities, the University of Essex, Anglia Ruskin University, and Writtle College as well as some of the most outstanding schools in the country – four

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Essex is the Administrative County of Essex as well as the two unitary areas of Southend and Thurrock.

of which – the girls’ and boys’ grammar schools in Chelmsford and Colchester – regularly feature amongst the top 20 schools in the whole country. We have opportunities to create new and thriving communities in Greater Essex with the need for 200,000 new homes by 2040 – we need the powers in respect of infrastructure and spatial planning to enable us to achieve that growth in a way that supports our wider economic ambitions for Greater Essex.

Our local authorities are typically low tax authorities and deliver high quality services. There is a strong record of partnership and sharing of services, including a powerful anchor network of our public service institutions. We have also collaborated strongly on the issues that Thurrock has faced showing the strength of our peer support and problem-solving approach.

And at a community level, Greater Essex is rich in strong community organisations and neighbourhood groups including the more than 300 democratically elected parishes. During COVID 19 we saw the strength of these community groups and parishes and we are committed to exploring how devolution can further strengthen their role.

Through our wider partnerships and collaborative arrangements, Greater Essex has led the way in creating safe and secure communities where businesses and residents can thrive. Working with and through our Community Safety Partnership structure, we have driven a 55% reduction in anti-social behaviour since 2016. Our innovative approaches to tackling drug driven violence and domestic abuse mean that Greater Essex is leading the way in getting these corrosive forms of crime down and supporting our young and vulnerable residents to become fully engaged, productive members of society.

In 2017, Essex became the first county in the country to have a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC), a move supported by all of the tier one and tier two councils and by all Essex MPs. This has led to significant financial and operational benefits and closer collaboration between the emergency services, while respecting the operational independence of Chief Officers. This has made a difference to policing, fire and rescue and the public, and more can be achieved with further devolution.

Despite these strengths and successes, there is also untapped potential in Greater Essex that devolution can help to unlock. In recent years we have seen Greater Essex fall behind its neighbours in the wider South East in terms of the pace of economic growth and levels of productivity. A growing population, combined with relatively slow growth in the number of jobs, and particularly high-value jobs, across some of our towns and cities has fuelled high levels of commuting, placing a strain on our local transport infrastructure. We also have high claimant counts in some parts of the region, leading to lower financial resilience and reliance on support services such as food banks and emergency funding schemes.

Around 183,000 Greater Essex residents now live in areas that are amongst the most deprived 20% in England, compared to only 106,000 in 2007. The COVID-19 pandemic, shocks to the global energy market and food supply chains, and the

current cost of living crisis risk further exacerbating these pressures and amplifying inequalities, including gender inequalities.

If we are to extend the opportunities that Greater Essex has enjoyed in the past to today's young people and to future generations, we will need to think differently, and work together in new ways.

We want Greater Essex to be the fastest growing UK economy outside London in the years to 2030. We see a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable economy as the strongest possible foundation for improvements in local living standards, health outcomes, educational attainment and the future viability of public services. We are seeking a Devolution Deal that will give local partners the resources, powers and policy levers to unlock Greater Essex's substantial and untapped economic potential and to share the proceeds of sustainable growth across communities – tackling disadvantage and spatial inequality and securing progress on the twelve levelling-up missions set out in the White Paper *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*.

Alongside boosting economic growth and Levelling Up, we also need to deal with climate change – a critical issue that requires urgent action now and into the future. Our residents and businesses are already facing impacts from flooding, coastal erosion, water scarcity, overheating: these impacts will increase year on year. Beyond this we are committed to lead the way in moving to a low carbon economy that will secure a long-term future for our businesses and residents. Net zero and climate resilience principles underpin our vision for Greater Essex alongside action to secure and protect our natural environment and our agricultural productivity.

The right deal will help us to:

- a. Boost skills and productivity: the relative shortage of high skilled jobs in Greater Essex is a reflection of the skills base of the working-age population. A relatively low proportion of our local workforce is qualified to Level 4+, constraining labour productivity, sustainable business growth and inward investment. A further 101,000 workers qualified at level 4+ would be needed in Greater Essex just to bring the area into line with national averages.
- b. Deliver improvements in local infrastructure: historic growth in communities across Greater Essex, and increased freight movements, have not been matched with improvements in local transport infrastructure. This has impacted the resilience of key inter-urban road links across Greater Essex and fuelled congestion in our towns and cities. Despite a reduction in rail journeys following the COVID pandemic, demand is expected to exceed the capacity of the network within the next decade. These factors place a constraint on future growth by increasing journey times, diminishing employers' access to customers and suppliers, and limiting the supply of skilled labour. A locally determined package of infrastructure improvement, including sustainable transport and digital connectivity, will be vital.

- c. Create and foster thriving communities: we need to build 200,000 new homes by 2040 to accommodate a growing population and workforce, whilst minimising stress on our transport infrastructure. We want these new homes to be environmentally sustainable and climate resilient, of a quality and price that attracts talented people to Greater Essex, and located in safe, secure and thriving communities. Achieving this means investing in the broader sustainability of our towns and cities, including the regeneration of our town centres, local schools, and the local living environment. If we get this right, we can attract inward investment, retain growing firms, reduce the damage caused to communities by crime and anti-social behaviour, and ensure that the benefits of sustainable growth reach all parts of the region. And we want to do this in such a way that we are creating community capital and building not just housing and homes but social connections that strengthen the resilience, safety, and well-being of our residents.
- d. Take a Public Health approach to strengthening health and well-being: reversing the increase in inequalities across Greater Essex is a key priority for us, including reversing widening health inequalities which are putting unsustainable pressure on the health system and on other public services. Poor health also means that many people are unable to play their full role in the economy and society. The Health Foundation estimates that 40% of the burden on health services may be preventable and around 50% of health outcomes are shaped by the wider determinants of health, in particular people's access to good jobs, education, a healthy environment and good housing.

Devolution is therefore critical to tackling health inequalities in Greater Essex as it will give local leaders greater control over key levers on the economy, housing, skills, environment and transport. This will help Greater Essex to bolster the work of the NHS and our integrated care systems in promoting better population health – helping people to live longer, healthier, more productive lives. Devolution will enable us to join up interventions on these issues in a way that is tailored to the needs of local places, and also to integrate more closely with the public health and prevention work that is being led by the Integrated Care Systems (ICS).

- e. Exploit the strengths of key sectors and maximise returns from our economic assets and the transition to net zero: Greater Essex has strengths in the med-tech and life sciences sectors and digital clusters in key cities. The growth of advanced manufacturing (particularly in south Essex), and in logistics (focused around our two freeports and airports) represents a major opportunity. There are also major opportunities in clean energy generation through hydrogen, solar farms and offshore wind – facilitated by our location on the energy coast.
- f. Accelerate our drive towards net zero: across Greater Essex there is an opportunity to create c.19,000 green jobs by 2030 – transitioning the workforce into growing sectors of the economy and reducing Greater Essex's environmental impact. There are huge potential gains with hydrogen technology along the Thames Estuary. There are also significant opportunities to reduce energy consumption, ease financial pressures on residents and generate income through the development of smart local energy systems, and

the roll out of retrofit programmes. An estimated 400,000 homes across Greater Essex are currently in need of retrofitting.

- g. Deliver a more integrated system of sustainable transport: this is key to energising and enabling many of our objectives: connecting residents with economic opportunities, removing constraints to growth caused by congested infrastructure, tackling disadvantage and inequality, improving public health and reducing our environmental impact. There are also significant opportunities to decarbonise the transport system to meet targets in the national transport decarbonisation plan.
- h. Take advantage of the power of data and digital technology: we want digital skills and technology to be a key strength of an inclusive Greater Essex economy. Central to this is the roll out of digital connectivity, including in remote and rural areas. This is a vital platform for future growth and improved productivity, and an essential element in promoting access to services, education and to social connections. We also want to help close the digital divide, equipping residents with the skills and tools they need for the digital age and to harness the power of data and digital technology to transform our public services so they are faster, better and cheaper. This builds on a wide range of existing work, including the Essex Centre for Data Analytics.

The right deal will position our investments in jobs, homes and infrastructure, within a policy framework that enables effective climate action to cut carbon and build resilience while unlocking improvements in the health and well-being of the population and further improvement in the levels of crime, anti-social behaviour, and community safety. We want a Greater Essex Devolution Deal to create new opportunities for local agencies to tackle entrenched social deprivation and to work closely with government to support people with complex needs – enabling them to take new opportunities and, wherever possible, reducing demand and cost on the wider system of public services – including the police, the criminal justice system, the benefits system, the health system and social care. The right deal will also build on the existing successful collaboration across our emergency services by extending local powers, influence and accountability over offender management and the broader criminal justice system, to help improve judicial outcomes and break the cycle of offending.

Crucially, the right deal will enable Greater Essex to secure these objectives within a governance framework that ensures accountability to local voters and taxpayers and which respects and enhances the distinct identities of communities across Greater Essex.

## **Section 2: Devolution Deal: Powers and Flexibilities**

### **Skills**

#### *What is the Proposition*

A key enabler of economic growth is a workforce with the skills to support the needs of the Greater Essex economy and our businesses into the future.

Greater Essex has 101,000 fewer people skilled to NVQ4+ than it should have (35% of 16-64 year olds are qualified to NVQ4+ - well below the Great Britain average of 43%). And is 8% below the national average at NVQ3+. We also have low levels of Traineeships and T-levels – meaning fewer progression routes into skills-based education and training. And these are aggregate figures for Greater Essex. Within our most deprived areas, the skills gap is even more stark.

In addition to this historic deficit, the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant negative impact on learning and skills. The OECD estimates that pandemic lockdowns decreased workers' participation in learning by an average of 18%, and in informal learning by 25%, and will have prevented unemployed adults from accessing upskilling and training opportunities. This 'lost learning', along with historically relatively low skills is a drag on productivity and an impediment to growth. Currently our workforce is over-represented in lower skilled occupations and under-represented in managerial and professional occupations – leading to lower workplace earnings than both regional and national averages. This is in spite of having some of the largest global businesses in Greater Essex. All sectors will require new skills to unlock the opportunities in the transition to a low carbon, sustainable economy.

We estimate that there are at least 50,000 new jobs in the key growth sectors that are vital to the future prosperity of Greater Essex.

#### *What will be Different*

Our approach is to adopt a more joined-up and co-ordinated approach across the skills system which incentivises skills provision more strongly to support the needs of Greater Essex businesses, accelerating our progress to being a high wage, high skill, high productivity economy. This will link with our focus on the key economic sectors that will drive the growth of the future and work with anchor organisations to address more comprehensively workforce needs now and for the future.

We think this will help young people to gain the skills they need to prosper in the modern workplace; enable businesses to find employees with the right skills to support their ambitions; and support UK plc by adding to the productivity and growth of the economy.

And importantly we see skills and wider economic prosperity not only as goods in their own right, but also as important in a range of other key strategic agendas for which a strong economy is foundational – not least the health challenges we face in certain parts of Greater Essex.

## *What we are seeking*

We are seeking the ability to directly address our skills challenges both for the growth sectors of the future and the foundational economy. To achieve that we are seeking:

- Devolved responsibility for the commissioning and funding of education and training for 16–19-year-olds in further education and for adults aged 19+ through the application of the Adult Education Budget. This will enable us to ensure alignment of local provision to the needs of an expanding Greater Essex economy and link provision more tightly to future career opportunities based on the modernisation and expansion of key sectors – recognising the importance of the different economic needs of our functional economic areas. Engagement with business and the experience we have had with regard to this work is that we need to exercise greater control over the curriculum and nature of the provision if we are to be able to achieve our economic ambitions and deliver the outcomes that our businesses need which is young people with good core competencies around communications, maths and science skills, critical thinking, adaptability, and problem solving.
- Building on the recent example of the Multiply fund for adult numeracy, we are keen to explore with Government the scope for greater local flexibility to shape specific skills funding streams in the future, to match them to the current and future needs of residents and businesses in Greater Essex.
- Devolution of unspent Apprenticeship Levy funds from Greater Essex businesses into a single place-based budget, and the power to develop a strategy to deploy this budget to respond to local needs and priorities, and achieve a much improved, employer-led offer – including flexibility to support skills tasters, short courses, modules, and full vocational qualifications, not just apprenticeships.
- Powers and flexibilities for joint working with key agencies, for example, joint working with the ESFA and FE Commissioners Office in undertaking FE institutions' reviews of how well the education or training provided meets local need, and joint working with the National Careers Service.
- Design and delivery of DWP contracted employment programmes – this should include working on careers education, Youth Hubs, and the vast range of adult upskilling/reskilling and employability support – ensuring this is fully joined up with vocational skills-based education to create viable pathways into future jobs. We would seek through our deal, the creation of employment and skills pathways into work for our most disadvantaged residents and the upskilling of workers on low incomes to attain better salaries and reduce the dependency on in-work benefits. The value of achieving this will be felt not only in economic but also in health outcomes and we would like to connect these discussions up with health colleagues' focus on the wider determinants of health to establish the potential for further pooling of funding to reduce health inequalities.

- Jobcentre Plus – We are keen to explore with government the scope for local strategic oversight of Job Centre Plus. This could enable Job Centres to become much more integrated into the local economy, public service provision and voluntary sector support. This would significantly improve outcomes both for those temporarily out of work and for those who face more entrenched obstacles to employment.
- The opportunity to extend Education Investment Area status to those parts of Greater Essex that fall below the national threshold (on a district rather than an LEA footprint). As part of our commitment to supporting excellent education for all pupils, we are keen to explore with Government the role that local authorities can play in supporting academies that are not delivering good or outstanding education. The new Levelling Up Partnership status of Tendring, announced in Spring Budget 2023, is an opportunity to look at the challenges forensically.
- Funding to create innovative skills activity including Higher Education short courses and enhancements to school curricula to support work-ready training, testing and trialing new models of delivery, engaging non-traditional learners, increasing opportunity and participation and raising aspirations.
- We will establish a Greater Essex skills council (drawing together/consolidating the federations of colleges, training providers, and education groups) linked to the Local Skills Improvement Plan Board and the Business Advisory Board and convene North and South Local Skills Assemblies, reflecting local economic partnerships, through which educational, employer and local authority stakeholders can maintain influence and respond to needs.
- We will wish to play a full role in shaping and influencing the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). The LSIP is important because it sets out key priorities and changes needed in the local area to align post-16 technical education with business needs.



## Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Functions

### *What is the proposition*

Our ambition is to be the fastest growing economy in the UK, outside of London. We are currently a member of SELEP, which does not represent a meaningful functional economic area. Disbanding the existing LEP and forming a new business led partnership as part of a Greater Essex Combined County Authority will enable us to build on our strengths and track record of collaboration. We want to support businesses across Greater Essex and encourage the growth and relocation of innovative, high productivity sectors that will benefit the wider economy. We will amplify and integrate the strategic voice of business across Greater Essex to turbocharge our economic interventions.

### *What will be different*

The integration of LEP functions will enable Greater Essex to develop propositions around sustainable business growth, innovation, skills, and regeneration linked to the needs of our local businesses, our understanding of the local economy and our commitment to key sectors that will deliver productivity improvements over the next 10 years. It will strengthen collaboration with businesses and create more opportunities to unlock, drive, support, and fund sustainable growth across Greater Essex. We will further strengthen our contribution to sub-regional economic public/private partnerships, including the Thames Estuary Growth Board, while continuing to work with partners in London and along the Kent coast.

### *What we are seeking*

We are seeking responsibility to oversee the delivery of a comprehensive business support programme through a Growth Hub providing business advice, links to grant funding, access to private sector equity finance/angel investment, training and networking, particularly to key sectors that our evidence suggests will be the drivers of prosperity and enhanced economic growth in Greater Essex over the next decade. This will include:

- Growing the sectors of the economy that Greater Essex has underlying strengths in and maximising the economic assets in Greater Essex (such as Freeport East and the Thames Freeport) to boost local growth – creating more high-paying/high-skill jobs.
- Building on our recent proposals to Government for new investment zones across the Greater Essex area and the Government's announcement of 12 new Investment Zones in Spring Budget 2023, we would like to explore the potential for new enterprise or investment zone type incentives in Greater Essex to allow for boosting of investment, economic growth, productivity and employment in key strategic locations.
- Designate relevant Customs Sites for Freeports: reducing barriers to international trade and investment for Greater Essex businesses.

- Create a business environment in Greater Essex which is successful in attracting domestic and international investment, and fosters a culture of innovation. We are seeking direct engagement with the Department for Business and Trade to promote Greater Essex internationally and also to secure our portion of innovation funding from the department /Innovate UK so we can drive greater innovation in specific sectors of the local economy, including working with the Thames Estuary Growth Board in raising the profile of the Estuary through the Board's Global Works programme
- Direct the development of high-quality, low carbon business accommodation to places where it is lacking, supporting clustering and agglomeration benefits, and align it with residential development and service provision (such as local schools) to create thriving communities.
- Create a Greater Essex workplace well-being offer with additional pump-priming funding from government to test our ability to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the workforce with demonstrable benefits to the NHS.

## Strategic Economic Investment

### *What is the Proposition*

We consider that the powers set out in the framework will enable us to achieve enhanced and sustainable economic growth across Greater Essex. We are keen to benefit locally from the proceeds of that growth, including from the transition to a net zero economy, and invest for the future to reinforce its momentum. A flexible local investment fund will enable us to make integrated, medium-term decisions about the needs of the Greater Essex economy, enabling a whole-system approach to inclusive and sustainable growth and development.

### *What will be Different*

We are seeking a single long-term transformational investment fund with maximum flexibility because it will accelerate delivery of investment, and enable us to maximise strategic alignment with other funding and opportunities linked to our strategic economic objectives. The determination of the parameters of any fund will need to be agreed but we would see the fund as supporting our sector growth aspirations; the development of our innovation and R&D capabilities and linkages with Universities; strengthening better business collaboration; supporting the development of our digital capabilities and infrastructure particularly in support of some of our rural and coastal areas; and potentially contributing to the development of a public health approach to addressing the wider determinants of health to address spatial inequalities.

### *What are we Seeking*

- Allocation of a multi-year investment fund for Greater Essex to include strategic pooling for our local delivery priorities.
- Additional funding for Research and Development for Greater Essex aligned to supporting our strategic growth sectors.
- A single departmental-style settlement analogous to the settlements currently under discussion for trailblazing deals as announced in Spring Budget 2023.
- A deal for future business rates retention for regionally important regeneration schemes.
- Planning and Delivery of UKSPF – this will enable us to exercise stronger local control and discretion over how we use these funds, the pace of spend and prioritisation. It will also enable greater join up of plans across Greater Essex to support business growth and productivity. We are keen to explore if there is scope to have greater local control over other funding pots to support regeneration and levelling up, to improve outcomes and reduce the inefficiencies of competitive bidding.

- We wish to develop a local Low Carbon Investment and Business Strategy setting out short, medium and long term plans to decarbonise business and grow green opportunities in Greater Essex. As part of this we want to negotiate with government a new local revolving zero interest loan fund for SMEs to enable investment in energy efficiency.
- We want to work with Government to make Greater Essex a centre for net zero innovation, including on zero carbon energy: hydrogen, solar and wind. The existing energy infrastructure and two major ports within Greater Essex offer potential for the production of green hydrogen for clean energy. The geographical positioning of the freeports with access to renewable energy from the North Sea and the fact that they could offer the space for electrolyzers mean they are well-placed, with the right support, to capitalise on the opportunity.

## Transport

### *What is the proposition*

Transport is a fundamental enabler of all strategic outcomes. Our current transport system is not working well enough. It is too reliant on car journeys and does not sufficiently enable active and sustainable travel, which leads to pollution, carbon emissions and congestion. It lacks capacity on some of our key road networks, such as the A12, A120, A127 and A13. It is poorly integrated across different modes and is also poorly connected. North-south travel (as distinct from in and out of London) is difficult and public transport and active travel needs to be better connected to areas of growth and economic opportunity. Some of our most deprived areas are also poorly connected with limited public transport, which entrenches lack of economic opportunity. We want to become a strategic transport authority and take control of local transport levers to enable us to build a more effective transport system. And we will use this to deepen our engagement and partnership with Transport East, working at scale where it will deliver better results for the sub-region.

### *What will be different*

Through local control of strategic transport, we will create a transport system for Greater Essex that is fit for the future. It will be better connected, more integrated, have more capacity, and be more sustainable. We will put a focus on expanding sustainable and active travel. A future transport system will therefore be better able to support economic growth, reduce deprivation and disadvantage, and promote a healthy environment and healthy and active lifestyles.

### *What we are seeking*

- Control of appropriate local transport functions e.g. local transport plans – we want to build a local transport plan at a Greater Essex level, enabling us to build a coherent transport network that works across the economic area, while also allowing for local delivery to meet the needs of local places. In order to support effective transport planning and delivery, we envisage creating a transport body empowered to deliver for Greater Essex in the same way as TfL for London or TfGM delivers for Greater Manchester.
- Ability to deliver a stronger and more sustainable bus network – the option of franchising powers would enable the commissioning of a fully integrated bus network across the whole of Greater Essex if it could secure sufficient revenue. This could include integrated ticketing; zonal fare structures; and its choice of vehicle standards (e.g., electric), fares, routes, and timetables. However, franchising will only work if it has sufficient funding to enable it to be delivered in practice, so we would need to be satisfied about financing before taking on bus franchising powers. If not, the scale of a Greater Essex transport authority would enable us to drive stronger Enhanced Partnership deals across the region, delivering better, lower carbon services and a more integrated network.

- Defined key route network – the combined county authority would have power over our most strategically important routes, enabling Greater Essex to deliver on wider cross-cutting transport priorities and make the changes that are necessary to ensure transport functions optimally across the region. We are developing a “place and movement” approach to ensure key transport routes support sustainable growth and place shaping.
- Priority for new rail partnerships with Great British Railways – influencing local rail offer, e.g. services and stations – This would enhance the ability to make the case for investments in Greater Essex based on improved passenger outcomes. This could include modest station access improvements (e.g., Wivenhoe); Flich line frequency; 2nd Stansted tunnel; integration with RTS; and freight improvements (various issues on lines outside Greater Essex such as track improvements around Leicester; and electrification on freight spurs to ports).
- Electric vehicle infrastructure – We note that the government is introducing a new £450 million local electric vehicle infrastructure (LEVI) scheme for local authorities to support local EV infrastructure delivery. Greater Essex is keen to be at the forefront of EV delivery in the UK and we would welcome engagement with Government on how we can best achieve this – not only through the funding stream but also through the appropriate devolution of infrastructure powers.

## Housing and Infrastructure

### *What is the proposition*

We have a housing affordability challenge in Greater Essex, driven by insufficient supply, with 200,000 new homes needing to be built by 2040. At the same time, we need to ensure that housing growth happens in a way that protects, preserves and enhances heritage and natural beauty; and that it is accompanied by the infrastructure and services required to support a growing population. We also need to improve housing security and quality for people on low incomes; and ensure sufficient specialist housing to meet the needs of a growing vulnerable population. New build and existing stock need to be made climate resilient and ready for net zero – we have developed an award-winning Essex Design Guide which sets out how this should be done.

We will ensure that our approach, under devolution, takes advantage of the benefits of strategic planning for housing and infrastructure development, economic corridors and accessible business clusters; but also preserves the benefits of a locally driven approach based around local place shaping.

We also need to acknowledge the clear link between infrastructure development and the wider determinants of health, community safety and crime. A Population Health Management approach focuses on the wider determinants of health and the crucial role of communities, local people and public services including councils, the public, schools, fire service, voluntary sector, housing associations, social services, police and transport services. All have a role to play in addressing the interdependent issues that affect people's health and wellbeing.

### *What will be different*

We will start to turn around housing delivery and housing outcomes for Greater Essex, so that housing becomes an enabler of, rather than a barrier to, economic growth, levelling up, improved public health (through design that encourages active travel), net zero, climate resilience, and stronger, safer communities. Infrastructure strategy and decisions will also seek to address the interdependent issues that affect people's health and well-being.

### *What we are seeking*

- Infrastructure Planning - we need to make sure that we can accommodate growth in Greater Essex in a way that is sustainable and enables our communities to prosper. We will consider whether a more strategic infrastructure plan, based on work previously done across Greater Essex to look at our infrastructure needs, will be helpful in enabling us to capture the full benefits of growth.
- Energy - we wish to explore the devolution of powers to enable leadership of local area energy and heat planning, bringing systems thinking to the design of a net zero energy system that works for all.

- Partnership with Homes England and greater devolution of land holdings – building on our existing work with Homes England, we want to build a more strategic collaboration to ensure that there is a short, medium and long term view of land supply across Greater Essex. This could include direct funding to build local capacity and joint work with Homes England to drive forward the programme across Greater Essex to highlight viable investment propositions to unlock and accelerate stalled housing sites. We would also wish to explore taking control of Homes England land in Greater Essex to enable more successful land assembly to drive housing and employment site regeneration. This would include the Homes England portfolio of existing sites, including the legacy sites from SEEDA and the Commission for New Towns and would involve a presumption in favour of transfer of ownership to the combined county authority.
- House building on brownfield sites, inc. funding – we want to explore the feasibility and benefits of speeding up and simplifying the process for building on brownfield sites through locally led partnerships with a range of support measures including recoverable investment funding.
- Energy performance of new homes – we are seeking to negotiate for Greater Essex to pilot new sustainable building standards that go beyond the bare minimum as part of our shared commitment to tackling climate change; and the ability to set ambitious planning policies that go beyond the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Building Regulations.
- Opportunity area\_– we want to explore the ability to identify key locations with potential for new homes, jobs and infrastructure of all types. Examples in London are linked to existing or potential public transport improvements and typically have capacity for at least 2,500 new homes or 5,000 new jobs, or a combination of the two.
- Housing development sites pipeline\_- creating a pipeline over the short, medium, and long term will enable us to both offer the scale to seek strategic partnerships and investment from major developers as well as working with local SMEs, housing associations and LAs/LA housing companies on appropriate sites.
- Devolved capital funding – as other areas have done, we will seek the devolution of some capacity funding to support the delivery of housing priorities in Greater Essex including new affordable homes, net zero ambitions and specialist housing.
- Affordable Housing – we are keen to explore options for funding and flexibility to enable the expansion of delivery by local authorities and local housing associations. We are seeking the same flexibilities as those agreed as part of the trailblazer deals to set the strategic direction, leadership, and strategy of the Affordable Homes Programme, as well as priorities for investment and strategic oversight.
- Retrofit - we wish to seek access to a proportionate share of the Government's Sustainable Warmth and energy company ECO funds, as well as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. In addition, we want to secure the powers to



implement a Landlord Registration Scheme to manage compliance with regulations including minimum EPC standards.

- Property Collaboration – we are seeking capacity funding from government to support Greater Essex consideration of a whole scale review of public sector assets with a view to rationalising and leveraging the use of our assets to underpin the delivery of more efficient public services.
- Capacity funding - currently Greater Essex authorities have the powers to enforce building standards and environmental health regulations but too often lack the resources to do so. Establishing shared resources, evidence bases and centres of excellence to ensure the quality of our housing stock would be an important step to empowering Greater Essex to deliver better housing outcomes for our residents. This could include shared resource to support viability assessments, strategic planning capacity, housing development capability, and joint procurement of temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- Land assembly and Homes England compulsory purchase powers – we are keen to explore taking on this power, subject to the agreement of the constituent councils over individual decisions.
- Digital Infrastructure - the government has indicated that engagement with local authorities on the delivery of digital infrastructure and potential economic and public service applications of data and data science is possible through a deal. The ability for us to agree our own contracts with BT Openreach and City Fibre, based on investment principles that recognise the increased cost of delivering to isolated rural areas but also the long-term economic and social benefit to bringing broadband to rural communities and businesses, would allow a step-change in outcomes for residents. It would allow Greater Essex to take a demand-led, responsive programme, delivered at a district level that focussed on quick delivery to targeted areas and may also support efforts to address digital poverty and vulnerability.

## Keeping the Public Safe and Healthy

### *What is the Proposition*

Safe and secure communities are the bedrock on which we build economic and social prosperity and a key determinant of health and wellbeing outcomes for residents. Since 2016, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has brought partners together to cut crime, improve public confidence, and reduce the risk of harm. Using existing devolved powers around precept setting and commissioning, as well as the ability to bring public, private and third sector partners together, the PFCC has secured public and partner support for the growth of Essex Police, and increased investment in strong local, visible policing and crime prevention.

Since Essex became the first county in the country to implement joint governance of policing and fire and rescue services, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service has played an increasingly important role in reducing risk in communities, building resilience within vulnerable groups, and extending its existing successful programme of prevention work. Its ability to work effectively in partnership for the greater good of Essex was evident in its strong response to the COVID pandemic. The securing of additional funding has also enabled the service to invest in growing areas of demand, such as building safety.

Both services, under strong independent Chief Officers with ring fenced funding, have increasingly worked in partnership across the wider Essex system to develop effective responses to new and emerging risks and threats. This includes the growing risk of wildfires, the growth of drug driven violence by county lines gangs, and the proliferation of domestic abuse as another dominant driver of violence within the county. Brought together through the convening powers of the PFCC, effective and innovative multi-agency partnerships are already making a significant difference in these areas and others.

We believe it is essential that devolution aligns the public safety and public health agendas – at a whole population level and in closing widening social and health inequalities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Under the leadership of the PFCC, the wider Essex system led the way nationally in the response to serious youth violence and drug driven violence by developing and aligning its efforts behind a multi-agency Violence and Vulnerability Framework and Unit far in advance of the Government's invitation to develop such units.

Through the Violence and Vulnerability Partnership we have seen the power of taking a public health approach to reducing crime and driving change across the wider system, with the benefits projected to be approximately 3.5 times higher than the intervention costs. Essex partners have already embedded this way of working into their business as usual and base budgets and committed to reducing emergency hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object by over half and reducing non-domestic homicides by more than a third over the next 10 years, releasing over £28m in net benefits by 2030. Further devolution would allow us to go further and faster, in more areas of threat, harm and risk, through wider multi-agency working.

Devolved commissioning powers and funding from the Ministry of Justice mean that investment in areas such as victim support services, independent domestic violence advisors and independent sexual violence advisors is already going further and making a bigger difference to residents. Further devolved powers around offender management would enable either the PFCC or a mayor to make a bigger difference in breaking the cycle of reoffending by providing tailored local, public health-based solutions, and reducing the lost human capacity and social cost of the corrosive cycle of reoffending. A stronger statutory role within the local criminal justice system and greater direct local accountability of other criminal justice agencies to that individual, would also allow them to work more effectively with criminal justice partners to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system and rebuild the trust and confidence of the public.

In the medium-term, we would like to explore the power of social care, education and health integration, alongside joint governance of policing and fire and rescue services as part of this process, along the lines of the Greater Manchester model. This would create the opportunity to make better use of Fire and Rescue resources as Health assets within the broader role envisaged by the fire reform white paper and through the commissioning of services that could be afforded if health and social care services and budgets were to be incorporated into a future devolution deal.

In the shorter term, we believe a Greater Essex devolution deal can help boost the work of our integrated care systems, facilitating greater ability to collaborate and work together on a broader set of strategic issues to improve population health and well-being and address the wider determinants of health. It will facilitate more joined-up and streamlined conversations in respect of economic development, skills, transport and strategic planning, which in turn will further enhance community safety and well-being outcomes.

Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) are coterminous with Greater Essex, and, as set out above, we have already realised many benefits of a directly elected Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, through strong partnership working, ringfenced precepts and budgets and greater strategic planning and commissioning. Building on our existing partnerships, we want to explore more opportunities to deliver services within a public health approach where the benefit derived reaches across systems beyond that of police and fire and rescue alone and contributes to their efficiency and effectiveness.

Greater Essex, in partnership with Government, will work with the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to agree an appropriate arrangement to ensure close collaboration and productive joint working on public safety, in a manner that learns the lessons of existing devolution models and which protects and preserves the operational independence, direction and control of both the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer and the funding of the services they lead. The PFCC has already recognised the benefits of operational independence enshrined in law for the Chief Constable through the Policing Protocol Order, and has replicated this for the Chief Fire Officer through the Constitution of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority, in agreement with the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

The PFCC model has also already demonstrated the clear benefits of the strategic focus provided by having a single directly elected official, accountable to the people for the strategic direction of the services through the Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan.

### *What will be different*

Without safe and secure communities, the positive impact set out through this EOI will be hard to achieve. Keeping the public safe and healthy are prerequisites to residents being able to engage with and benefit from improvements in the environment, training and economy.

Devolution can help to build on and deepen local partnership working, and also strengthen collaboration with government on public service integration and reform.

The impact of air quality, housing, employment, early years, education and skills on health and wellbeing is well understood. Tackling the wider determinants of health delivers benefits not just to the individuals and their communities but will also reduce demand on public services across the board. Learning from the work of the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit in developing a public health approach, we believe that this model could achieve additional benefits in other areas such as substance misuse, nutrition and obesity. In addition, greater collaboration would see an enhanced offer to key vulnerable groups.

By devolving powers in respect of offender management and the wider criminal justice system, we would be able to reduce reoffending, create safer communities that businesses want to locate and invest in, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the local criminal justice system. By getting ahead of offending, by allocating resources based on risk rather than demand, and working collaboratively to prevent harm, we would create an operating environment that enables growth and prosperity, multiplying the impact of other areas of this proposed devolution deal.

In addition, greater collaboration would see an enhanced offer to key vulnerable groups.

Devolution provides the opportunity to join up our approach to delivering services more strategically across Greater Essex. Our ambition is to transform public service outcomes through this devolution deal and therefore we will wish to consider some of the fundamental elements of local delivery and how we can continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our offer to local residents through this route.

### *What are we seeking*

- Additional capacity funding to enhance and expand the progress that has already been made and to extend the public health approach to new areas as described above. The Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit is an example of this, having followed the example set by Glasgow and Cardiff and demonstrating the difference Essex can make through devolved funding and strong local partnerships. We could use devolution to build on and expand this approach.

- A data sharing pilot between partners with government support to be able to plan and deliver more targeted and effective interventions. Improved data sharing across areas will allow for more evidence-based approaches to targeting funding and services and analysing what works. It will enable detailed understanding of inequalities across areas with the power to direct funding and services where they are needed. Through this devolution deal we are seeking enhanced dialogue with government and the ONS on establishing local data standards for all public service agencies to make the join up of data at a local level more straightforward and agreement regarding the granularity and timeliness of key data sets to make targeting interventions more evidence-led at the appropriate level.
- Devolution of health and justice budgets from NHS England to whichever directly elected individual exercises the PFCC's functions going forward would mean more targeted and effective health and wellbeing support for people in the criminal justice system. This builds on the work we are already doing through the Essex Integrated Criminal Justice Commissioning Group, which is having a positive impact on supporting vulnerable people in the criminal justice system and helping to reduce reoffending.
- More powers going forward to bring agencies together to improve offender management, and thereby reduce reoffending, by providing tailored local, public health-based solutions.
- Greater local accountability (as opposed to regional or national) of other key partners within the criminal justice system, which will help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system and rebuild the trust and confidence of the public.
- We would also wish to explore whether there are key public health outcomes – for example obesity, healthcare for 0-19s – where devolution would enable us to take a stronger whole-system approach to not just addressing the presenting issue but also tackling the root causes. Building on our existing pilot with Sport England, we are particularly interested in building 'moving more' into the priorities of any future CCA – recognising that movement – especially walking and cycling – provides a range of physical and mental well-being dividends. We will be seeking to promote active workplaces; active schools; active travel; active places; and active communities to realise these benefits and also support our drive to environmental sustainability.

## The Environment

### *The Proposition*

Climate change is something that we all face and in Greater Essex we are committed to ensuring we lead the way in moving to a low carbon economy that will secure a long-term future for our businesses and residents. We are already dealing with the impacts from our changing climate and are seeing increasing coastal erosion, flooding, water scarcity, overheating and soil degradation. Our residents and businesses are directly affected and these impacts risk undermining our agricultural productivity and our plans for future development. We need to ensure that we support our communities to be climate resilient through a clear focus on green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

Effectively addressing climate change is core to our vision for a successful Greater Essex. This underpins actions across all areas of investment and development set out in these devolution plans. Alongside these proposals, a series of core actions are needed to secure our natural environment. These will ensure we can continue to have a successful agricultural sector while securing 30% green infrastructure critical to protect our soils, build climate resilience and provide a healthy environment for our wildlife and our residents.

We also want to lead the way in delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan and the legislation in the Environment Act, balancing our growth ambitions with the nurturing and cherishing of wildlife and biodiversity on land and in the water.

### *What will be different*

Greater Essex is already a national leader on climate action. Through the Essex Climate Action Commission, we have developed and are delivering an ambitious programme of activity to transition to net zero. This involves bringing together action by public services, anchor institutions, businesses and communities. We will use devolution to accelerate progress on net zero across our whole region; to ensure that our natural environment is protected from the impacts of climate change; and to enhance the environment for the benefit of our residents, visitors and future generations.

### *What we are Seeking*

- Green Infrastructure - through a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, we want to bring green infrastructure planning across Greater Essex together in a more integrated way, using powers and funding from DEFRA, Natural England and the Forestry Commission.
- Sustainable farming – Greater Essex is a very rural area in parts and the Essex Climate Action Commission recommended a target of achieving net zero farming by 2050. We want the power to set local criteria that apply to funding of landowners through the national Environment Land Management Schemes. This will enable us to influence the development of more sustainable farming in parts of Greater Essex.

## Arts, culture, heritage, tourism and sport

### *The Proposition*

The creative industries are the UK's biggest growth sector, with 1.3 million people working in the creative economy across London and the South East. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills predicts 1.2 million new workers are needed in the sector over the next decade. Tourism and the visitor economy are crucial industries for Greater Essex, with the county attracting large numbers of leisure and business visitors every year. This is particularly important for many of our coastal areas, which include some of the areas of highest deprivation in the region, and therefore is a key element of Levelling Up. The UK government wants to see a growing, dynamic, sustainable and world-leading tourism sector reaching its full potential and driving growth across all parts of the UK. We share this ambition.

Sport and active lifestyles play a powerful role in supporting mental and physical health and addressing disadvantage. Essex is one 12 national pilot areas that is working with Sport England on a comprehensive and community-led programme to boost physical activity.

### *What Will Be Different*

Devolution offers an opportunity to strengthen how we work with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), its arms-length bodies and other national bodies. This will enable us to significantly enhance Greater Essex's track record of developing and delivering ambitious place-based strategies to realise the region's rich cultural potential.

This will include looking across culture, heritage, sport and visitor economy initiatives and identifying opportunities for a joined-up, strategic approach. Building on Greater Essex's outstanding cultural strengths and assets, this collaborative strategic approach will support our cultural partners to deliver an exceptional cultural offer, thus maximising the contribution of culture and heritage to placemaking, local communities and sustainable economic growth across Greater Essex. For example, we will work with DCMS and Historic England on developing legacy investments, the protection and enhancement of Essex's castles and renewing the region's pride and place in further priority places.

Similarly, by building stronger strategic relationships with DCMS and Arts Council England regarding the Levelling up For Culture Places (CPP Project Thurrock) and Arts Council Priority Places (Basildon and Tendring) and the region's National Portfolio Organisations (such as the Focal Point Gallery and Metal Culture Ltd. in Southend), we can work more impactfully and ambitiously to deliver vital levelling up interventions.

Taking forward this work will have significant benefits for the region's economy, including in providing more jobs in areas with high levels of deprivation. Moreover, high quality, accessible cultural and sporting opportunities can act as levers to improve public health outcomes around activity levels, obesity, and mental health, and can also have a positive impact on community safety – for example, using sport

to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour, gang-related activity and to help reduce reoffending.

### *What we are seeking*

- Powers to designate areas of Greater Essex as Creative Enterprise Zones where artists and creative businesses can find permanent, affordable space to work; are supported to start-up and grow; and where local people are supported to learn creative sector skills - understanding that arts and culture and the creative industries are important contributors to inclusive growth and placemaking. The Creative Enterprise Zones model in London has helped local areas with accessing inward investment, enabling new and affordable workspaces for creatives, access to skills and training, and community engagement. We would like to build on this model in Greater Essex.
- We want to increase investment in culture, heritage and sport in Greater Essex to boost the local economy and tackle health inequalities. This could include a redevelopment of key cultural infrastructure; investment in key creative industry skills across the county; and the development of support structures for the full range of creative industries e.g., film, gaming, architecture, fashion; artists' studios and gallery space; and continued investment and development of the region's museums and galleries. We want to work with Arts Council England to ensure Greater Essex gets its fair share of national funding, supporting delivery of a regional culture strategy.
- We want to work with DCMS through the accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnership for the region to help develop Greater Essex's visitor economy, with a view to harnessing our potential to grow domestic and international visitor spend, and encourage visits throughout the year rather than just during the traditional tourist season. This collaborative work, across those areas set out in the Government's Tourism Recovery Plan, could include the potential to expand major events and festivals and drive up the economic and place-making potential of these; expansion of business tourism by capitalising on our gateway links with Northern Europe; and harnessing Greater Essex's leading voice in delivering green tourism and its ambition to become England's first fully net zero visitor destination.
- We want to build on the work already in train across Greater Essex and review the region's offer regarding outdoor and leisure facilities, considering the challenges facing the leisure centre sector at present from the energy crisis and the impact of the pandemic, aiming to both reduce the carbon emissions from the leisure sector while matching leisure provision with better health outcomes.
- We are seeking continued investment and development of the Essex Film Office to further establish it as a recognised leader in the industry and strengthen the case for creative infrastructure (e.g., film studios, post production facilities and skills/learning facilities).
- Specific projects that we wish to take forward and that could benefit from support include:



- The redevelopment at Roots Hall, Southend.
- Relocated stadium for Southend United Football Club.
- Recognition of the importance of Southend Pier and continued investment.
- Development of artists' studios and gallery space, continued investment and development of the region's museums and galleries (particularly recognising the cultural importance of the Princely Burial and the London Shipwreck).
- Continued development of Southend Airport and the Launchpad.
- Development and restoration of Essex's heritage include the development of the visitor experience at Cressing Temple Barns.
- Restoration, preservation, recording and the interpretation of the cultural heritage of four registered parks and gardens (Belhus Park, Danbury Park, Thorndon Park, Weald Park); and key sites across the county including Saffron Hall Trust; Roman Wall in Colchester; Palace theatre Clacton, and Shire Hall in Chelmsford.

## Finance

### *What is the proposition*

Our goal is a system of funding for local government in Greater Essex that gives local leaders greater freedoms and flexibilities around resources and raising funding; greater certainty over funding sources so that we can plan effectively for the future; the capacity to fund strategic economic investment; and the capacity to drive even better value for money and outcomes for our residents, through better join up and strategic commissioning of services. Greater Essex leaders are committed to doing this in the most effective way possible, maximising the impact of the public pound and gearing and leveraging private investment into our growing economy. Scale and diversity of assets across Greater Essex presents a potent opportunity for private sector partners, together with our proximity to London and its eastward growth and expansion.

### *What will be different*

Devolution will bring in added investment to the region – principally through a long-term investment fund, but also through other investment propositions that we are putting forward. This is important because it will enable us to make the long-term investments that are critical to delivering against the Levelling Up missions. Greater local control of national funding programmes (as on adult skills) will enable better tailoring of investments to local needs and opportunities. This will include joining up funding in local places to deliver better outcomes and return on investment and working more closely with communities to ensure they own the solutions in their neighbourhoods.

### *What are we seeking*

- Mayoral precepting – should Greater Essex adopt a Level 3 devolution deal, we would look to have mayoral precepting powers to make the investments in infrastructure, skills, technology and transport set out in this deal proposition, and to accelerate the transition to “net zero”. Should the mayor subsume the PFCC’s functions, we would expect to raise separate precepts for policing and fire and rescue, as are currently raised by the PFCC.
- Business rates – we seek the power in the White Paper to levy a supplement on business rates to fund new infrastructure, subject to the support of the local business community. This will enable the combined county authority to have the power to fund local infrastructure projects that are considered necessary by local businesses and which are not funded by central government or already built into existing local capital plans.
- Alongside the above, we would seek wider flexibility to offer discounts on business rates to encourage certain sectors to relocate to Greater Essex. As signalled in the Spring Budget 2023, we would also like to explore the option of retaining a greater share of business rates generated locally, as this will further strengthen the incentives to invest in promoting local economic growth.

### **Section 3: Leadership and Governance**

Greater Essex already benefits from strong local leadership and partnership working across our upper tier authorities, our cities, districts and boroughs, our Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, our health and other partners. We also have an increasingly established way of working in our north and south sub-geographies, which enables us to benefit from working at scale across organisational boundaries, while at the same time tailoring approaches to Greater Essex's diversity.

Whilst our devolution bid is outcome, not governance, led, we are seeking discussions with Government on both a Level 2 and Level 3 deal. This means that we don't start with the question "what governance model do we want"; rather we start with the question "what will deliver the best outcomes for our residents and businesses". With this in mind, we want an ambitious devolution deal for Greater Essex that will enable us to fulfil the economic and social potential of the region and address the big issues that we have set out in this document. Essex and Thurrock are clear that the opportunities and ambitions of Level 3 are significant and would deliver material benefits to Greater Essex residents. Southend-on-Sea City Council passed a Motion in 2020 which stated that 'this Cabinet opposes a directly elected mayoral form of governance, or any form of governance that diminishes the powers of the Southend-on-Sea Borough Council as a unitary authority and the largest conurbation in Essex.' Therefore, understanding both the offer for a Level 2 deal alongside Southend and a parallel conversation on Level 3 elements of the framework is where we would like to begin negotiations in good faith with Government.

- The three upper tier authorities, Southend-on-Sea City Council, Essex County Council and Thurrock Council, would form by statute the founding constituent members of a combined county authority but through the detailed governance work we are keen to explore whether there are other constituting representatives that it would make sense to include in our arrangements.
- We are engaging with city, district and borough councils on the best way of ensuring their effective participation in a future combined county authority. The benefits of devolution cannot be delivered purely by upper tier authorities and requires close collaboration across tiers of local government; and we want to reflect this reality in the governance model for how a CCA will work.
- We are also working with wider public service partners, recognising that they will have a strong interest in shaping the Deal to secure the public service outcomes that are important to the people we serve.
- We are committed to the principle of subsidiarity – that is decisions should be made as close to residents as possible. We don't want to move away from an over-centralised Whitehall model to an over-centralised Greater Essex model. We are supportive of an approach similar to that adopted by the East Midlands.
- Discussions are continuing as to whether the PFCC role should be incorporated into a future Mayoral Combined County Authority. This would be facilitated by the fact that the PFCC footprint and the MCCA footprint will be co-terminous. However,

we are committed to ensuring that a devolution deal for Greater Essex strengthens and doesn't undermine the success of the forward-thinking model we have had in place for policing and fire and rescue service governance across Greater Essex since 2017 and our collective capability to tackle crime and support community safety.

- The functions of the existing LEP as they relate to Greater Essex would transfer over to the Greater Essex CCA and we have been in discussions about this with the LEP and with Kent and East Sussex, our partners in the existing LEP.

Once the devolution deal starts to take shape, we will be able to confirm these and other details about how the governance model for the new authority would operate, applying the best lessons from existing combined authorities. We will seek to ensure that a combined county authority, however it is constituted, is lean, efficient, provides good value for money and does not duplicate decision making.

## The Greater Essex devolution EOI and the Government's four tests.

Our approach to devolution meets the four tests set out by the Government as follows:

- 1) Effective Leadership – powers will be devolved to areas that have ‘the necessary structures and leadership for clear, strong local decision-making’ (WP, p.137).

*We have strong local leadership in Greater Essex and a strong track record of collaborating together across organisational boundaries. This was demonstrated for example during the pandemic, and is demonstrated in our thematic partnerships and how we are working together in our sub-geographies of North Essex and South Essex.*

*The governance section confirms that we recognise the need to put in place the necessary governance structures to implement the deal, according to the level of deal that is agreed.*

- 2) Appropriate geography – devolution deals should be based on geographies that cover functional economic areas; are ‘locally recognisable’ in terms of identity, place and community; and cover *at least* a whole county council area. Scale is also an important factor and new deals will need to support a population of at least 500,000.

*Our EOI is based on the geography of Greater Essex. It recognises that that is the appropriate footprint for devolution as it comprises the most significant functional economic area. Our pitch also recognises the diversity and economic distinctiveness of different parts of the area and we will be building in to our approach arrangements which preserve and enhance the characteristics and distinctiveness of the different parts of our area – particularly building on the arrangements that are in place across South Essex and are currently forming across North Essex.*

- 3) Flexibility – the framework set out in the WP is not supposed to be prescriptive. The Government expects deals to be tailored to the needs of local areas and to be built on and extended over time.

*We are ambitious for our residents and our place. Our EOI responds to the powers and functions set out in the devolution framework and also seeks to discuss and explore options around additional powers and responsibilities that are linked to the distinctive needs and opportunities of Greater Essex. We have set out some areas – for example around health and social care integration – where we do not expect to secure devolution in our first deal, but where we are signalling a medium-term ambition for further devolution in future.*

- 4) Appropriate accountability – local leaders and institutions must be transparent and accountable; work closely with local businesses; seek the best value for taxpayers' money; and maintain strong ethical standards.

*A devolution deal will strengthen value for money, transparency and accountability over how money is spent locally. For example, there is currently no real visibility over how the national adult skills budget is spent in Greater Essex, nor the outcomes that are derived from it. We will change that and use this transparency and accountability to drive better performance. We are keen to develop ways to demonstrate our delivery against the Levelling Up missions in return for greater financial freedom and autonomy which will help secure those outcomes. We look forward to responding to the new accountability framework for devolved authorities.*

## **Section 4: Engagement**

We are engaging on devolution with the PFCC and the PFCC's Office and with local Councillors from upper tier authorities and from district, city and boroughs. This is important because we want to ensure that locally elected politicians are fully informed about the details and implications of devolution and have the opportunity to shape the approach we are taking. So far, we have held general briefing sessions open for all Councillors, as well as specific briefing sessions for Councillors from individual authorities. These have been well attended and have seen a high level of engagement.

In addition, the three upper tier authorities have successfully taken the proposal to submit an expression of interest on devolution through their Cabinets and Full Councils (Southend) during February and March. By taking it to our Cabinets and Full Councils we have also started a public conversation around devolution, which we will follow up on more substantively over the summer and autumn once we are clear on the Government's intention with regards to our proposal.

We have engaged wider system partners and businesses in the discussion. We have engaged Health partners from across the three ICSs. We are also doing the same with the Essex Association of Local Councils (which represents our town and parish councils), the Vice Chancellors of the three universities in Greater Essex, representatives of local FE colleges and with the leaders of the main voluntary sector umbrella organisations.

We have held a roundtable event with Greater Essex businesses discussing devolution and what it means for local businesses, including the future of the LEP and support for our two freeports.

Overall, we are confident that at this stage, we have general support for our approach to devolution from local Councillors and from key system partners and businesses. Of course, this will need to be re-assessed through further engagement, including at a parish and neighbourhood level, and in due course through a public consultation once the details of a devolution deal for Greater Essex become clearer.

## **Section 5: Working with MPs**

We recognise the importance of working with our 18 MPs as part of the development of these devolution proposals. In addition to the regular discussions we have with MPs, we have undertaken additional activity to make sure that MPs are engaged and able to influence the process and thinking.

At the outset of the process, we sent all MPs a briefing on the work that we were kicking off with leaders in Greater Essex, and we wrote to all MPs in December to update them on the discussions.

In January, we held several briefing meetings on devolution, which have been attended by most MPs in Greater Essex, or representatives from their offices. This has enabled us to keep MPs up to date on progress and to ensure their views are reflected in our approach. We wrote to MPs in March and shared the EOI with them. We will continue to meet with our MPs and engage them in dialogue on these proposals as they are shaped.



## **Section 6: Timeline**

This sets out the timeline we are pursuing with respect to signing off the Deal and establishing new structures. The timeline is provisional and will be influenced by the pace at which the government wishes to progress.

*Spring to Autumn 2023: deal refinement and negotiation with Government* - we would be seeking to start negotiations with the Government in Spring 2023 with the hope of having a draft deal agreed between Greater Essex Authorities and the Government by late summer/early autumn 2023. Based on reports from other areas we would anticipate this taking up to a maximum of 6 months depending on capacity on both sides and the complexity of the deal.

*Autumn 2023: Public announcement of deal and pre-consultation engagement with constituent authorities* - following conclusion of negotiations we would be aiming for a public announcement on the deal to be made in the Autumn of 2023 to give time for wider engagement with Greater Essex authorities and key partners ahead of launching a public consultation. As part of the pre-consultation engagement Councils would take the draft deal through their individual governance processes to agree in principle before the public consultation is launched.

*Winter 2023/24 Public Consultation* - an 8 week public consultation would take place commencing in late 2023 / early 2024 dependent on agreement of all constituent authorities. Consultation results will be submitted to the Government and reviewed by constituent authorities before they formally vote on the draft deal.

*Spring 2024. Constituent Authorities vote on the final deal.*

*Spring / Summer 2024. Government makes statutory order to devolve powers and funding* - the timing of this will be determined by the parliamentary timetable and agreed in principle during negotiations with the Government.

*Summer 2024 onwards.* Implementation of the deal according to the specifics of the deal that have been agreed.

This timeline is based on information provided from other devolution deal areas we have engaged so may be subject to change depending on specific arrangements and agreements made between Greater Essex Authorities and the Government once negotiations have commenced.