

**Committee:** Full Council

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> December 2010

**9**

**Title:** West Essex District Councils Group: draft Memorandum of Understanding

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Item for decision

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## Summary

1. The three District Councils of Harlow, Epping Forest and Uttlesford have been increasingly working together on a number of cross boundary projects, particularly around forward planning, economic development and the Local Strategic Partnerships. The Councils lie along the M11 corridor and form a definable economic sub area within Essex and the wider Local Enterprise Partnership area. The three Council Leaders and their Deputies have met on several occasions. The Chief Executives also meet. It is now proposed to introduce a degree of formality, and the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is put forward as the basis for closer working between the three authorities. There is no question of loss of sovereignty or local accountability. All three Councils will be discussing this MoU at their meetings in December.

## Recommendations

2. That the Council adopt the Memorandum of Understanding

## Financial Implications

3. None

## Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

## Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	The MoU could form the basis for joint consultation/communication in appropriate circumstances
Community Safety	None

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Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	All
Sustainability	None
Workforce/Workplace	The Council is already entering into a partnership around revenues and benefits with Harlow

### Situation

The proposed MoU reads as follows:

### **The West Essex District Councils Group - A Memorandum of Understanding**

- Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils when acting together agree to be known as the West Essex District Councils Group.
- Whilst each Council has its own sovereignty and characteristics, which each partner will continue to recognize and respect, they are committed to working together to promote the interests of West Essex and to improve their organisational economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

### The Councils collectively recognise:

- The need to promote and to protect the interests of West Essex.
- The need to work together to develop ways to improve their value for money, the performance of their services and their responsiveness to the needs of their communities.
- That significant and continuing constraints on public sector resources mean that there is an increasing need to work collaboratively as the West Essex Councils with each other and with other public, voluntary and private sector organisations to achieve economies and efficiencies.
- The need to maintain their individual roles as community leaders but to work together to develop strategic responses to pan West Essex, sub-regional and

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national issues.

- Individually, where appropriate, they may need to look beyond West Essex for a solution to a problem affecting their area.

The Councils agree to:

- Jointly provide a strong West Essex voice to ensure that its interests are heard at the highest level and that the resource investments and the commissioning of services by others meet the needs of its communities.
- Work jointly on strategic issues where it is appropriate and will benefit the residents and businesses of, and visitors to, the communities of West Essex.
- Develop opportunities to achieve economies of scale, improved efficiency and improved effectiveness through partnership working together.

The Councils therefore undertake to:

- Always give consideration to a West Essex District Councils Group approach to the influencing, commissioning and delivery of services for the benefit of the communities they serve.

It is considered that this draft MoU represents a significant step forward for commitment to partnership working in West Essex

**Risk Analysis**

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The MoU is not agreed	1 The MoU is a recognition of informal links and working practices and is a platform to move forward	2 Not agreeing the MoU would not prevent the existing informal arrangements developing and continuing	The MoU would not prevent any of the three authorities looking elsewhere but West Essex ought to be the first consideration. Working relationships are such that this would continue without the MoU

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

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3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.