

Committee: Council

Agenda Item

Date: 13 October 2015

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Title: **Greater Essex Devolution**

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Item for decision

Summary

Discussions about devolution have been taking place between the County Council and the various Unitaries, Districts, Boroughs and City Councils that comprise Greater Essex for several months. The Leader, Cllr Rolfe, has chaired the Leaders' working group and has regularly updated Members on progress through his announcements to Council. The Leaders jointly signed a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 4 September. A Members' workshop was held on 16 September. While a copy of the letter was sent to all Members, Officers consider it should be formally noted by Council.

Recommendations

1. That the letter of 4 September signed by all the Greater Essex Councils' Leaders is noted

Financial Implications

2. None at this stage

Background Papers

3. 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

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	Press statements have been released by the Greater Essex Leaders. A workshop for Members was held on 16 th September 2015. A further workshop will be held in the autumn/winter.
Community Safety	None at this stage
Equalities	Not clear at this stage

Health and Safety	None at this stage
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None at this stage. Council will need to approve the final submission to Government.
Sustainability	Not clear at this stage
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	Not clear at this stage

Situation

5. The Government has been encouraging Councils to come together and to submit bids to demonstrate how, by working together, they can better contribute to the growth agenda by locally allocating central government funds. These bids will then be considered as part of the autumn spending review. Many Councils have submitted bids: some such as Manchester and Cornwall are at advanced stages while others are not. The models vary in accordance with local circumstances.
6. All 15 of the Greater Essex Councils submitted a bid on 4 September stating their intention to set up a combined authority for Greater Essex.
7. The bid sets out the aims and ambitions of devolution. Members should be aware that this is an early stage in the process, and negotiation will take place with representatives of the Government by the end of the year. If successful, approval of Essex authorities will be sought early in 2016. The Deal will then become legally binding and a Combined Authority will be formed. The proposed combined authority would sit alongside existing authorities and provide greater collaboration across the county on strategic issues and focus on improving outcomes for the people and businesses of Essex.
8. Because of Essex's diverse local economies, the model proposed for Greater Essex is bespoke and would see the combined authority working alongside strategic growth boards. Uttlesford is part of the West Essex quadrant comprising ourselves, Harlow and Epping Forest councils – and a formal agreement to work together was approved by Council in December 2010. It is submitted that these arrangements will strengthen the joint public and private sector leadership of growth and strengthen democratic accountability for delivery.
9. The submission focusses on economic growth, connecting people and places, homes and communities, skills and investment.
10. The letter of 4 September is appended.

Risk Analysis

11. There is no formal commitment at this stage so the risk is limited. A detailed risk assessment will need to accompany the final submission.