

Meeting: Council
Date: 20 March 2025
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: No
Title of Report: **Southend-on-Sea City Council's response to MHCLG's Greater Essex Devolution Consultation**

Executive Director: Claire Shuter, Executive Director of Strategy and Change
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Executive Councillor: Cllr Daniel Cowan, Leader of the Council

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is currently consulting on a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas of Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Southend-on-Sea City Council (referred to as Greater Essex in MHCLG's consultation and this report). The purpose of this report is to advise Council of a report to Cabinet which seeks consideration of, and approval to, submit the Authority's proposed response to the consultation questions.
- 1.2. Southend-on-Sea City Council (the Council) is a respondent to the consultation and has drafted a formal response, as set out in the attached Cabinet report at Appendix 1, setting out that the Council agrees that the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Greater Essex is likely to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of some or all of the people who live and / or work in Southend; that doing so will secure effective and convenient local government in Southend and across Greater Essex; and that the proposed MCCA is based on a geography that reflects the identities and interests of local communities.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

- 2.1. **Consider the Cabinet report attached at Appendix 1 which sets out the proposed response to MHCLG's Greater Essex Devolution consultation and makes such Recommendations to Cabinet as it sees fit.**

3. Background

- 3.1. The Government aims to shift power from Whitehall to local communities via empowered local leaders through a national programme of devolution, fostering economic growth and improving public services.
- 3.2. In January 2025, the Council, Essex County Council, and Thurrock Council requested inclusion in the Government's Devolution Priority Programme for Greater Essex. This programme aims to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority by April 2026, with the first mayoral election in May 2026.

On 5 February 2025, the Government confirmed Greater Essex's inclusion. On 17 February 2025, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched a public consultation in Greater Essex to gather views on the establishment of a proposed Mayoral Combined County Authority for Greater Essex.

- 3.3. Public consultation on the benefits of devolution and the establishment of new combined county authorities is a key part of the Minister of State for Local Government and Devolution's assessment and decision-making process, with certain statutory tests needing to be met in order to proceed to achieving a devolution agreement and establishing a mayoral combined county authority.
- 3.4. The consultation is being led and delivered by MHCLG. The Council, along with Essex County Council and Thurrock Council, are respondents to the consultation and have no formal role in its delivery. The consultation opened on 17 February 2025 and will run until 11:59pm on 13 April 2025.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations to this report. However, the Council will maintain a close watch on any financial implications arising from these decisions that may benefit or disadvantage the Authority and consider these in future reports to Cabinet and Council at the appropriate stage of the devolution process.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations to this report. However, there will be significant legal implications arising from the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Greater Essex. These implications will be considered in future reports to Council and Cabinet at the appropriate stage of the devolution process.

6. Appendices

- 6.1. **Appendix 1:** Southend-on-Sea City Council's response to MHCLG's Greater Essex Devolution Consultation, Cabinet report 21 March 2025

7. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
Executive Director(s)	Claire Shuter	07/03/2025
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	07/03/2025
Monitoring Officer	Susan Zeiss	07/03/2025
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr Daniel Cowan	11/03/2025