

Essex County Council
Leaders Office
County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1QH



Rt Hon George Osborne MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

Date: 25 November 2014

Our Ref: DF/AC

Rt Hon William Hague MP
Leader of the House of Commons

Rt Hon Eric Pickles
Secretary of State for Communities and Local
Government

Copied to:
Clive Betts MP, Chairman of Communities and
Local Government Select Committee
Graham Allen MP, Chairman of Political and
Constitutional Reform Select Committee

Dear Ministers

Re. conversation with government about devolution settlement for Essex

Local authority partners in Essex have watched with interest the recent announcement of a devolution settlement for Greater Manchester. We have long held similar aspirations to have greater say over our affairs and greater ability to influence a range of public spending decisions for our citizens to achieve the best outcomes for our communities. We passionately believe that great counties like Essex, with our historic towns and boroughs and our newly created city of Chelmsford, should be able to take on similar responsibilities and take our place alongside England's great cities.

Our vision is of a prosperous and successful Essex and we believe that empowering local areas is the means to unlocking our great potential. We are therefore writing to outline our ambition and commitment to taking on more powers and responsibilities through a corresponding desire to explore options to strengthen and improve our joint governance and partnership working even further in the future. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with government officials and ministers and believe that Essex, as one of the largest counties in England, would be well-placed to explore how devolution might work in non-city areas.

Essex is a large and historic county of 1.4 million people. The 12 district/borough/city councils of Essex and the county council together spend nearly £3 billion a year. We

work closely with our other public sector partners in Health and the emergency services. We recognise that only by working together can we achieve the economic prosperity and the healthy and safe communities that our citizens deserve.

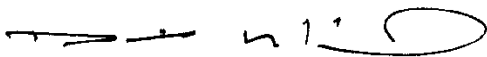
Essex has an excellent track record of partnership working. Through our Whole Essex Community Budgets pilot, we have demonstrated our ambition and commitment to working together to tackle complex problems, to secure quicker economic recovery through targeting job creation in key growth locations and drive infrastructure investment. Through the Essex Partnership Board, we have established a forum that brings together not just the leaders and chief executives of the Essex local authorities, but also Health, the Police and representatives from business and the voluntary and community sector. Through the Essex Employment and Skills Board, a business-led partnership which is already working with providers, employers and local authorities to remould local skills provision, we have demonstrated the potential to improve outcomes for local people and connect them with the needs of the local labour market. We have supported 3,000 apprentices over the last four years.

But we believe this is just the start. We are even more ambitious for our areas and believe that we can deliver the job and housing growth for Essex that will increase our net contribution to UK economic growth. We believe that the recent deal with Greater Manchester is an ambitious blueprint that other areas – like Essex – should be able to benefit from.

We are committed as local partners to working together, with government, to explore options for a devolution settlement for Essex and we recognise that part of this conversation needs to explore options for how our partnership governance arrangements could be strengthened in a way that respects a partnership of equals.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Finch', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cllr David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council

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Email: david.finch@essex.gov.uk

Cllr Roy Whitehead, Leader of Chelmsford City Council and Chairman of Essex Leaders and Chief Executives Group

Cllr Phil Turner, Leader of Basildon Borough Council

Cllr Graham Butland, Leader of Braintree District Council

Cllr Barry Aspinall, Leader of Brentwood Borough Council

Cllr Colin Riley, Leader of Castle Point Borough Council

Cllr Martin Hunt, Leader of Colchester Borough Council

Cllr Chris Whitbread, Leader of Epping Forest District Council

Cllr Jon Clempner, Leader of Harlow District Council

Cllr Bob Boyce, Leader of Maldon District Council

Cllr Terry Cutmore, Leader of Rochford District Council

Cllr Mick Page, Leader of Tendring District Council

Cllr Howard Rolfe, Leader of Uttlesford District Council