



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Alison McGovern MP
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Sent by email to: Councillor Barry Aspinall, Leader of Brentwood Borough Council; Councillor Chris Whitbread, Leader of Epping Forest District Council; Councillor Dan Swords, Leader of Harlow District Council; Councillor Daniel Cowan, Leader of Southend-on-Sea Council; Councillor Danielle Belton, Leader of Rochford District Council; Councillor Dave Blackwell, Leader of Castle Point Borough Council; Councillor David King, Leader of Colchester City Council; Councillor Gavin Callaghan, Leader of Basildon Borough Council; Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of Braintree District Council; Councillor Kevin Bentley, Leader of Essex County Council; Councillor Lynn Worrall, Leader of Thurrock Council; Councillor Mark Stephenson, Leader of Tendring District Council; Councillor Petrina Lees, Leader of Uttlesford District Council; Councillor Richard Siddall, Leader of Maldon District Council; and Councillor Stephen Robinson, Leader of Chelmsford City Council

19 November 2025

Dear Leaders,

Thank you for your continued work and collaboration to bring forward proposals for unitary local government.

For the next stage of local government reorganisation, our approach is to consult on all submissions that seek to meet the terms of the 5 February 2025 statutory invitation. My officials have carried out a preliminary review of the submissions received on 26 September to ensure that they address the statutory requirements under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act). Specifically, that the submission contains one option for the whole of the invitation area, that each principal authority has only made (or co-signed) one proposal, and that there is sufficient evidence provided to make a judgement in due course against each criterion. Where submissions request a boundary change together with structural change, we have also looked at whether a justification has been provided.

While a preliminary assessment of all submissions has been conducted, we have not yet made any formal assessment against the invitation criteria. This will be completed once the consultation process has concluded, so that all evidence can be considered. This approach is consistent with that for Surrey where we consulted on all proposals that met the statutory requirements and were accompanied by sufficient information that would enable a decision.

I am today launching statutory consultations on the 17 proposals I received on 26 September. I appreciate that you may have views on proposals other than your own, and indeed some have already written to me to express those views. Please be assured that before taking decisions on which proposal, if any, to implement, the Secretary of State will

consider these proposals carefully, alongside the responses to the consultation, all representations and all other relevant information, assessing the proposals against the criteria before reaching a judgement in the round.

The consultation on the four proposals received from your invitation area will be available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/essex-southend-on-sea-and-thurrock-local-government-reorganisation> until 11 January 2026. Responses to the consultation should be submitted through the department's platform 'Citizen Space' in the first instance, though responses can also be made by email and post. Artificial Intelligence will be used to assist officials to analyse the responses received, as set out in the consultation documentation.

Named consultees are listed in the consultation documentation, but I would like to hear the views of all those interested in these proposals, including local residents, town and parish councils, residents' associations, businesses and the voluntary and community sector. As such, I would also ask that you use your existing networks to bring the consultation to the attention of local people and organisations. In doing so you should ensure your actions are compliant with the Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity. Please also make sure that consultation documents meet accessibility standards when hosted on your website, and take measures to ensure that digitally excluded groups can access consultation documents, including proposals, in hard copy where appropriate.

Our timetable is ambitious, but it is also the right thing to do. Local government reorganisation will simplify local government and deliver councils who are equipped to drive economic growth, improve local public services, and lead and empower their communities. I look forward to working with you over the coming months to deliver on our ambitions.

I am copying this letter to your Chief Executives, Thurrock Commissioners and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex.

Yours sincerely



Alison McGovern

Minister for Local Government and Homelessness