



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP**

*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities  
and Local Government*  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Cllr. Kevin Bentley  
Leader of Essex County Council

29 January 2026

Dear Councillor Bentley,

I set out to Parliament on 22 January that I would not be including the election to Essex County Council in legislation I would be bringing forward to postpone elections for one year. However, in my statement, I acknowledged that I had received a further representation that I would consider, which was the email you had sent that morning.

I have now considered that email, together with the representations you made on behalf of your Council, your response to my request for clarity on your position, public statements you made about the potential postponement of elections, and the other representations I received. I am writing to confirm that I will **not be including the election to Essex County Council in legislation to postpone local elections.**

I recognise the significant demands facing Essex County Council, including the implications of holding elections alongside key reorganisation milestones early this year, and am grateful for the clarity you provided on how postponement would release essential capacity to support delivery of reorganisation. However, in reaching my decision I placed particular weight on the fact that the Council has not made a clear and unambiguous case for postponement through its formal representations and your repeated statements that the Council would not be seeking postponement. I have been clear through this process that I would listen to local leaders and not seek to impose decisions on councils from Whitehall. For these reasons, and on balance, I consider it appropriate that the elections to Essex County Council take place in May 2026.

Thank you again for your engagement on this matter and for the constructive way in which Essex County Council continues to approach local government reorganisation and devolution discussions. I will deposit a copy of this letter in the House of Commons Library to inform Parliament of my decision.

I am copying this letter to your Chief Executive, the Leaders and Chief Executives of other councils in Essex, as well as to local Members of Parliament and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,

**RT HON STEVE REED OBE MP**

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government