

## Appendix 1

### Thurrock Council: Greater Essex Devolution Consultation: Draft Response

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There are 7 questions in the consultation. For each question, you can provide the following answers:

- Strongly agree.
- Agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Disagree.
- Strongly disagree.
- Don't know.
- Prefer not to say.

There is a maximum of 1000 characters to explain your answer after each question.

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Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

#### Strongly Agree

Thurrock Council strongly agrees that establishing a Mayoral Combined Authority over the area will deliver benefits for the whole of Greater Essex. We have made great strides in recent years strengthening and deepening our partnership work with Essex County Council and Southend on Sea City Council and we believe by working together through and alongside a Combined Authority we can focus resource on local priorities, unlocking our potential, driving growth and enhancing quality of life for our residents further and faster than under existing arrangements.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?

#### Strongly Agree

Thurrock Council strongly agrees with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority. Allocating votes using the methodology set out in the consultation means that no one existing upper tier authority area can, on its own, direct policy and allocation of resource across the whole of Greater Essex. The voting arrangements also make sure that the directly elected Mayor has a strong voice in any decision making.

It is important to engage and involve the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the District, Borough and City Council's across Essex County from the start. The District Councils should be invited to participate on working groups to develop and establish the Combined Authority and a District Council representative could be invited to join the Combined Authority as a non-constituent member while Local Government Reorganisation takes place, the new Unitary Councils are established and become constituent members in due course.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

### Strongly Agree

Working across the geography will support the economy. Devolving growth driving powers such as local transport, skills and economic development will mean the Combined Authority can focus on policy and allocation of resource on local priorities.

Having a voice at the Council for Nations and Regions and the Mayoral Council will ensure Greater Essex has a voice at a national level, representing local people and businesses in the development of policy.

The Council recognises driving long term growth is about more than the direct drivers of growth. Creating places that people want to live with a focus on health and wellbeing and the environment alongside housing will enable the Combined Authority to take a holistic view of the area, building on strengths, addressing challenges and driving good growth across Greater Essex.

The Council supports the ambition for new unitary councils to strengthen their partnership work, driving efficiency and improving services through public service reform.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?

### Strongly Agree

The Council strongly agrees that the Mayoral Combined Authority will improve social outcomes for the area.

By devolving powers and funding the Combined Authority develop policies that address social outcomes at a Greater Essex level rather than working within the constraints of a 'one size fits all' national policy. This will mean the Combined Authority can focus on addressing local challenges – for example north to south public transport routes or addressing skills gaps in our key sectors and industries.

Formal links to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner will mean the Combined Authority can work with the emergency services alongside the upper tier authorities to address complex issues in a holistic manner – addressing the root causes of problems.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

### Agree

Working across the area will improve delivery of services. Creating unitary authorities eliminates duplication and will drive efficiencies compared to a two-tier

model and larger unitary areas will create financially sustainable authorities better able to withstand economic shocks and benefit from economies of scale, while still recognising the importance of local identity in decision making.

Drawing on our experience we recognise all the benefits unitary status can bring but also the challenges a small Council can face in terms of ability to withstand financial shocks. It is right as we go through the process of Local government reorganisation that we ensure the future unitary councils which will make up the combined authority are sustainable in the long term and provide strong and resilient public services for their area. A focus on Greater Essex provides an opportunity to discuss strategic issues without impugning the sovereignty of each unitary authority.

**Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?**

Agree

Thurrock Council agrees that working across the geography through a Mayoral Combined Authority has the potential to improve the natural environment. The powers devolved to a Combined Authority and strategic relationships to be created with national bodies like Natural England will enable meaningful dialogue and cooperation to address support for the natural environment alongside the drive for growth. By working together at a combined authority level we are better able to address environmental issues such as air pollution and opportunities such as enhancing our natural habitats which stretch beyond current administrative boundaries.

The Mayoral Combined Authority will also be able to use its resource to drive growth of green tech within Greater Essex – meeting our own priorities while addressing climate change and the drive for net zero.

**Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?**

Agree

Thurrock Council agrees that working across the proposed geography has the potential to support the interests and needs of local communities and local identities. Devolving powers from national Government to the Combined Authority will mean policy can be influenced by and better reflect local needs, opportunities and challenges than the current arrangements allow.

The Combined Authority will be made up of constituent members drawn from the unitary Councils across Essex and they will represent and reflect the views of their local communities in decision making.

The criteria used for reorganisation of local government in Greater Essex reflect the need to create new Councils based on identities but are large enough to be financially sustainable in the longer term. Provided the criteria are applied the

Council believes the new unitary authorities will be well placed to reflect local communities across Greater Essex.