

26 September 2024

OPEN LETTER TO LEADERS: ESSEX, THURROCK AND SOUTHEND-ON-SEA**DEVOLUTION FOR GREATER ESSEX**

Following the invitation from government to submit an expression of interest in a devolution deal we are aware that you have been giving this consideration. Whatever the initial preference expressed by the three Essex councils, we hope that ultimately a mayoral deal can be achieved, as the firm view of the business community is that this is the best way forward for Essex.

The Essex Chambers of Commerce represents around 700 businesses, including many with a national or international profile. Our membership was very disappointed last year that the three councils were unable to unite behind a shared ambition for a mayoral deal, and our members continue to show solid backing for this (reflected in the BBC article here: [Essex Chambers of Commerce calls for mayoral devolution - BBC News](#)).

We believe a deal involving a directly elected Mayor, with executive powers and accountability to the electorate rather than to a particular political party, is in Essex's best interests. This would potentially put Essex on a similar footing to the West Midlands, Greater Manchester or Teesside, where the introduction of mayors has significantly raised the profile of those areas and encouraged investment both public and private and confidence in their ability to determine and deliver on local priorities. We believe sustainable growth in Essex would be best delivered under a similar arrangement, which would command the confidence and support of business, including through the new Greater Essex Business Board.

We also believe it would help to get Essex working better together. Whilst it would not abolish any existing local authority boundaries it would provide a powerful incentive for our local authorities to work together more strategically, efficiently and effectively – as well as bring significant new government funding for investment in transport infrastructure, skills, business support and other areas necessary to underpin economic growth. As we have seen elsewhere, devolution is not an end in itself but can initiate a process which over time delivers more power and autonomy to local people.

There is a logic and momentum here that we think it would be unwise to resist – and a risk that Essex, if it does not achieve a mayoral devolution deal, is left behind other places which are prepared to embrace fully the principles of devolution. We therefore urge you to continue to work together and support the effort to secure a mayoral deal and help Essex to build on its considerable existing strengths and achieve its undoubted potential.

I would of course be very happy to discuss this issue with you if helpful.

Thank you and best wishes.



Denise Rossiter
Chief Executive