

Talking Notes MAY (v2) 3 Fields – Finchingfield 27 May @ 7.00pm

County

The ECC Local Highways Panel (LHP) process is now suspended – but may now be resurrected with more hoops and only for “existing plans”.

The petition launched to highlight this issue has now exceeded 350 signatories and Gt Bardfield are aligned too – and keen to see what ECC says.



County & District (Essex devo and LGR)

UK Govt response to the Essex Council leaders proposal – 7 MAY

Our next opportunity to comment (but not vote) on the Essex devo and Local Govt reorganization will be September 2025 – when we hope to learn the number and scale of Unitary Authorities which will make-up Greater Essex Combined County Authority (GECCA).

GOVT responses to key questions raised are cut and pasted here



3. Capacity funding support

You (Essex Leaders) asked for capacity funding support from the government to cover the costs of preparatory work, estimated between £5m to £7.5m, acknowledging these costs come on top of existing service pressures. £7.6 million will be made available in the form of local government reorganisation proposal development contributions, to be split across the 21 areas. Further information will be provided on this funding shortly



10. Funding reforms

You (Essex Leaders) asked for temporary protection from any negative impacts of the government's proposed funding reforms during the transition period, seeking stability to accommodate financial adjustments. Government recently consulted on finance reforms and confirmed that some transitional protections will be in place to support areas to their new allocations. Further details on finance reform proposal(s) and transition measures will be consulted on after the **Spending Review in June**. We are open to discussing assumptions further if we can assist in financial planning



£1.5bn



Thurrock Council in Essex has a **£1.5bn** debt following a series of high-risk investments. The Conservative-run unitary local authority is also due to find out whether Westminster will allow it to increase council tax by more than 5%.

9. Debt [£1.5bn]

You (Essex Leaders) asked about the treatment of debt, particularly for Thurrock, to ensure new unitary councils are not **unfairly burdened by legacy debt**, and to discuss **potential tax rises** to support **Council Tax equalisation**. We note the desire for clarity and further discussions around the **area's debt position**. We have set out the Government's approach to Thurrock Council's debt as detailed **at Annex B**.



ANNEX B: Government's current position on the treatment of Thurrock Council's debt

1. The Government accepts that Thurrock Council holds significant unsupported debt that cannot be managed locally in its entirety.
2. The Government is committed to providing an initial tranche of financial support for debt repayment for Thurrock Council in 2026-27, ahead of the implementation of reorganisation in Greater Essex.
3. The Government would need to consider the terms of any financial support for debt repayment in relation to assurance over the Council's financial position, the Council's continued commitment to reduce the debt locally within their capacity, overall Value for Money for the local and national taxpayer, and how any financial support could be implemented in the context of specific reorganisation proposals from Greater Essex.
4. As per the guidance accompanying the statutory invitation, proposals should ensure that criterion (2f)¹ is fully considered.



6. Discussions with other government departments

You (Essex Leaders) asked for access to and facilitation of discussions with other government departments, emphasising the importance of direct communication with key departments to test operating models. **Rebecca Griffith, your MHCLG point person**, will be able to support your engagement with other government departments, and MHCLG colleagues will continue to work with HMT on issues regarding debt in Thurrock.

Latest Update can be found here (7 May 2025)

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/about-council/plans-and-strategies/our-vision-essex/devolution-and-local-government-0>

GECCA Next Steps

Autumn 2025 – GECCA reps submit full plans to UK Govt re xUAs?

2026 – “Greater Essex Consultation” – Public

8 MAY 2026 – Greater Essex Regional Mayor Election (direct)

MAY 2027 – Election of Shadow Authorities (Regional Mayoral plus xUA’s)

APR 2028 (or later...) – xUA’s Go-Live



DISTRICT

Unusual Corporate Policy Development Committee meeting on 9 April

- BDC to “borrow for bins (~£3m)”
- ECC “bill to burn contingency for ETS Carbon (~£25m p.a.)” – Black bin waste treatment change



ECC has extended the consultation on a new range of proposed planning changes by the Incinerator Operator. Residents can comment on these proposals until **TUE 27 MAY 2025**. See FB CllrsAultandStaines for details.



Local Plan Refresh

Local Plan Review Timetable

This is the timetable for reviewing the Local Plan. It has been updated as a result of the central government changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Timetable for Review

Local Plan Review Starts	Early 2024
Call for Sites	Spring 2024
Evidence Base	Spring 2024
Issues and Options Consultation	20 January - 7 March 2025
Referred Options Consultation (Reg 18)	October/November 2025
Pre-Submission Consultation (Reg 19)	Spring 2026
Submission to Planning Inspectorate	June 2026
Review Complete	Adoption December 2026

NEW TOWNS TASKFORCE

Building new towns for the future

>10K

Interim Update

February 2025

By summer 2025, we will submit a final report to MHCLG ministers, in line with our Terms of Reference, which will include a list of places new towns could potentially be located, as well as wider recommendations on the funding and delivery of new towns.



MAYOR



Finchingfield Parish



Mark and Bev have been busy litter picking and prettying

Michael and Mark were honoured to play small roles in the brilliant VE80 day – which was utterly fantastic, especially the accessibility and inclusivity of interest for all age groups.





15 May 2025

New research highlights tourism's importance to social cohesion and wellbeing

We have published a new report, *'The Social Value of Tourism'* that demonstrates the positive cultural and social impacts that tourism has on local communities across the UK.

Looking beyond the significant economic impact of the sector, the research provides evidence of how tourism improves wellbeing and social cohesion for both visitors and residents alike, as well as boosting employment opportunities, social mobility and improving local infrastructure.

Key findings from the report include:

- **Tourism creates employment opportunities** for people from a wide range of educational backgrounds and for young people through strong apprenticeships, especially in rural and coastal communities. 85% of tourism/leisure apprenticeships were undertaken by those aged 24 and under, compared to 52% across all sectors.
- **Tourism improves infrastructure and access to culture, green spaces and local businesses**, with more than half of host community residents living within five miles of these amenities compared to longer distances elsewhere. High footfall tourist areas also had examples of expanding bus and rail services benefiting both residents and visitors.
- **Tourism strengthens the link between people and their communities**. 58% of residents surveyed in these destinations felt connected to their community compared to 35% elsewhere. Those living in tourism areas were also more likely to be proud of their local area with sense of pride-in-place scoring 12% higher overall than in 'non-host' communities.
- **Domestic tourism positively impacts personal wellbeing**, with the report finding that almost 80% of people surveyed felt more positive after travelling in the UK and more than 70% felt healthier or more replenished after their trip.

The report examines the social impact across three sections:

- **Community Roots** - Pride, Identity, and Empowerment;
- **Shared Spaces** - Nature, Culture, and Everyday Benefits;
- **Future Pathways** - Growing, Regenerative, and Inclusive Tourism.

14 case studies from a range of destinations are also included and tell the story of the transformative impact of tourism, through a local lens. From the cultural impact of Eurovision 2023 in Liverpool to the social value of our treasured national parks to Blackpool creating a year-round visitor offer supporting jobs.

We will be hosting a webinar to dive deeper into the report and destination case studies to life. The date will be announced shortly.

