

# ECC Report April 2025

## **Interim local government reorganisation plan has now been submitted**



On 18<sup>th</sup> March ECC Cabinet agreed that the [interim plan for local government reorganisation in Greater Essex](#) should be submitted to government.

Each of the other 14 Essex authorities held special meetings to debate it and everyone agreed it likewise.

The plan was then duly submitted on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

This sets out how changing council structures in the county would help us to be more efficient. Delivery of essential services would be more streamlined. We will also be able to reduce duplication and achieve more for less for our residents.

At this stage, there is no confirmation of how many councils there will be in the future. Along with partners, we will be gathering evidence to inform the final business cases. These will be shared with government in September.

The Government will then make the final decision for Greater Essex.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Kevin Bentley, said: “This is a momentous point in our collective journey to improve the lives of our residents, ensure they

have access to better opportunities, and to transform local services – now and in the future.

“All 15 councils and the office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in Greater Essex have worked incredibly hard to develop this joint submission which, I am proud to say, has residents and businesses at its heart. We are not only doing this for the people of Essex now, but for future generations who will benefit too.

“Local government reorganisation is about bringing decision making about essential services closer to people - something we know is important to them. Our work will always be about ensuring the voices of cities, towns and villages are heard, and this will be a continued focus in the detailed plans.

“We don’t underestimate the scale of what is being proposed. Work will continue between now and September to gather evidence and inform the final structures that will help us to achieve economies of scale and protect vital front-line services from unnecessary risk.

“We need to ensure the new councils – however many this turns out to be - are sustainable. The Government will consider this as part of their final decision and so we must get this once-in-a-generation opportunity right.

“We remain fully committed to continue working with our partners over the coming months to secure the long-term future of our great county.”

Tendring DC’s Chief Executive Ian Davidson was instrumental in having secured all 15 Councils agreement and he has been tasked with progressing the next complex stage of the full submission to Government in September 2025.

## **£6 million boost to tackle fuel poverty in Essex**



Essex has been awarded £6 million to tackle fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions over the next three years.

The money is from the Warm Homes: Local Grant, managed by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. We bid for funding with the district, city, borough and unitary councils in the county. It will be used for measures including heat pumps, solar panels and insulation.

Applications to receive help from the **Warm Homes Local Grant in Essex will open in the summer.** Homes will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. This will determine which energy efficiency measures can be installed.

The Warm Homes: Local Grant is aimed at low-income and vulnerable households. This includes both owned and rented properties.

Essex County Council Climate Czar and Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Reduction and Recycling, Councillor Peter Schwier, said: "We're pleased our partnership bid was successful. This new funding will make a major difference the county's most vulnerable residents over the coming years.

"No one should be living in fuel poverty. This, and climate change, are two significant issues we are continuing to take extremely seriously in Essex.

"Working with our partners, we continue to look for new ways to improve the lives of our residents and protect the environment, now and for the future."

The new grant is the first step to help delivering the [Warm Homes Plan](#). The plan will help up to 300,000 homes across England find ways to save money on energy bills. It will also help to heat homes with cleaner energy.

The partnership bid for funding did not include Basildon Council which submitted its own bid.

## ***Read the latest Essex Careers Magazine***



The Essex Careers Magazine supports residents with features on roles in specific industries and sectors. It also features tips, tricks and insights for securing jobs and training opportunities. It is available free of charge online.

The seventh issue of the magazine focuses on the early years and education sector, featuring information from experts. It employs over 45,000 individuals in Essex.

This sector isn't just about teaching, it offers a wide range of roles for those interested in working with children and young people.

You can also find out information on apprenticeships, career paths and qualifications needed for roles in early years and education.

Additionally, it features careers in the British Army, the renewable energy sector, and a spotlight on Mid-Essex.



This is a valuable tool for anyone looking to advance their career.

Councillor Tony Ball, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability, said:

“The readership of the magazine continues to grow, with thousands accessing the online, digital and hard copies. This latest issue highlights the wide range of roles available in early years and education, a sector that plays a crucial role in shaping young lives. The magazine provides essential guidance for those looking to enter or progress in this field.

“I encourage residents to read the latest edition and discover the opportunities available across Essex.”

[Read the latest edition](#) of the Essex Careers magazine.

## ***Introducing Essex Year of Opportunity***



A new, £1.3 million programme - Essex Year of Opportunity - has been officially unveiled

The programme will run throughout the next year. Through it, we will help people of all ages increase their skills and broaden their horizons. We want everyone - regardless of their background - to reach their potential and discover the path that's right for them.

A key part of the programme will be improving access to education, training and jobs. We will build on best practice, scale up existing projects and aim to close the gap between employment and education.

Making sure these areas are aligned will benefit both young people and businesses. It will mean young people can gain vital skills and experiences. Schools can access new ways of thinking and partners for their career programmes. Employers will also have the chance to support their future workforce.

Councillor Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability, said: "The Essex Year of Opportunity is a major milestone and part of our ongoing commitment to encouraging lifelong learning and skills development.

"We have made significant progress through our previous 'Year of' programmes. However, we know there is still a lot of work to be done. 26% of adults in Essex have low, or no qualifications and there is an above average unemployment rate for young people aged 16 to 25-years-old.

"With significant investment, the Essex Year of Opportunity will tackle this head on. We want to raise aspirations and inspire a love for learning so that everyone in Essex has the chance to succeed regardless of their background."

Councillor Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Communities, Economic Growth and Prosperity, said: "Working closely with the Essex business community will be key to the Essex Year of Opportunity. We want to better understand the skills they need from their workforce, now and in the future. We can then align this with local training opportunities and the careers support provided in schools.

"As well as raising people's aspirations, a highly-skilled workforce will contribute to the overall economic growth of Essex. We have previously committed to driving growth by forging strong partnerships and developing policies that promote innovation and address skills shortages. Essex Year of Opportunity is one part of us delivering on that commitment."

Essex Year of Opportunity launched during a celebratory event at Hylands House in Chelmsford. It follows the success of the Essex Year of Reading and Essex Year of Numbers. Both programmes have resulted in positive outcomes across the county.

Roy Blatchford, independent Chair of Essex Education Taskforce, said: "The Essex Education Task Force was originally set-up to support pupils whose learning had been disrupted by the pandemic. Three years on, we are proud to see how it has grown and what has been achieved through each of the 'Year of' programmes to date. I am so pleased to mark this exciting milestone with

the announcement of Essex Year of Opportunity and another significant investment.

"We have seen the impact that targeted work to address key issues in Essex can truly have. I am excited for the coming year and urge people of all ages to get involved and take advantage of the opportunities that will be on offer."

Activities, projects and initiatives will take place throughout the Essex Year of Opportunity. These will give individuals the skills, inspiration and knowledge needed for future success.

Find out more about [Essex Year of Opportunity](#) and how to get involved.

## **Essex Year of Numbers**



Launched in 2023, the Essex Year of Numbers was a countywide campaign that aimed to inspire a love of learning, with a focus on numeracy. It came in response to evidence from UK charity, National Numeracy, that shows a link between low numeracy skills and debt, unemployment, and even poor health. Essex Year of Numbers provided pupils with new opportunities, resources and knowledge to feel more confident using maths.

On Tuesday 4 March we celebrated the Essex Year of Numbers at an event at the Hylands Estate, bringing contributors, experts and young people together to look back on the extraordinary work over the last 12 months. The video below demonstrates some of the great activities from the Essex Year of Numbers.

## The Essex Year of Reading

Launched in 2022, [the Essex Year of Reading](#) helped children, young people and adults discover a love of reading. Multiple projects involved primary, secondary and SEND schools across Essex. Guidance and resources are still available.

## What happened during the Essex Year of Numbers

### Eco Refill project

Launched in collaboration with [Pupils Profit](#), the Eco Refill project enabled primary school aged children aged nine and above to set up and operate their own monthly Eco Refill shops on school premises.

As part of the project, we provided each school with an enterprise training toolkit and students are tasked with writing a business plan, applying for job roles within the shop and learning to evaluate the effectiveness of their business. Find out more about the [Eco Refill project](#).

### Everyday Magic of Numbers

The [Everyday Magic of Numbers series](#) demonstrates how numbers are used in everyday life. Musician, poet, writer and educator, Christian Foley, looks at how numbers are used in Shakespeare's writing. [Watch Christian Foley](#) discuss how he uses numbers in their everyday life.

**97% of children offered places at preferred secondary schools**





On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 parents of 16,758 pupils found out about their secondary school applications.

In total, 97% of parents are being offered one of their school preferences for the 2025 academic year. 83.86% are being offered their first preference and a further 8.72% are being offered their second preference.

This means 92.58% of children have been offered either their parents' first or second preference.

This year, 99% of families applied online and will receive their offer by email or our website.

Councillor Tony Ball, our Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability, said: "I am really pleased to see that, once again, we have been able to offer so many pupils their parents' preferred secondary school place this year.

"Starting secondary school is a hugely important milestone in a child's life and I hope those embarking on this exciting next step enjoy their last few months at primary and junior school before starting their next academic adventure."