

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM: ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL:
(DATA AND COMMS)

Local authorities in Greater Essex are exploring options for unitarization and the development of Combined Authority/Authorities in response to the Government's invitations for local government reform.

Data and Information

In undertaking this work, we wish to be led by the evidence and to work collaboratively on the development of our proposals.

We believe it is in all partners' interests and in the interests of all our residents to share the insight and data we generate or commission as part of this process transparently and widely so that colleagues across Greater Essex are able to access and use the key information on which critical decisions will be made and debate it openly.

All partners therefore agree to share financial data, statistics, management information, business intelligence, resident survey data, and other data and information relevant to the development of all LGR/CA proposals – whether commissioned or generated in-house - with other partners as they produce it in order to support the shaping of proposals. All partners will act in the spirit of co-operation and will comply with reasonable requests for data or other relevant information from others.

Each partner will provide a schedule of information and data relating to its own data in a format which has been mutually agreed in order to allow it to be used as part of the evidence base(s) so that colleagues across Greater Essex understand what information is available and how to access it.

We will each also notify partners of details of any forward commissions for data collection which we intend, as partners, to make.

We will set up a data room to facilitate access to these data – evidence, documents, research outputs, key datasets - that can be accessed by Chief Execs and their designated officers or appointed consultants and to which all partners can upload and download relevant documents.

Individual partners have appropriate sign off mechanisms to ensure the shared data sets are robust before uploaded to the data room.

As well as sharing the outputs of any such work, we also agree that the raw data sets, working documents and source references will be available to all partners through the data room in a useable, accessible format. We agree that we will act in an open and transparent way and not use significant data sets that have not been shared in the data room to inform our proposals.

Communications

We also agree that a level of co-ordination in terms of our public messaging will be helpful.

We do not believe it will be possible, or desirable, to have a single authority speak on behalf of all authorities through this process. In fact we think it is important that we all have a voice and can engage directly with our publics on these proposals.

However, we also recognise that it is helpful to colleagues and consistent with our principles of collaboration that we should ensure that colleagues are made aware of any communication to the national press and trade media about the ongoing development of our proposals, ahead of publication, and we will all seek to agree key messages, although we will not be bound by this.

This sharing of media planning will be done through the Comms Officer Group and Chief Exec to Chief Exec as appropriate.

Monitoring and Review

In agreeing this level of co-ordination we recognise that it is in all our interests, regardless of the propositions we wish to put forward, that we are able to demonstrate to government an ability to work through complex and contentious issues in a professional and disciplined manner to reach solutions. We also recognise that this way of working is in the interests of our residents and employees.

As partners we choose to enter this protocol in good faith and it will be up to us to make sure we stick to its principles and operationalise it in an efficient and helpful manner.

This informal agreement will be kept under review and if anyone decides to withdraw from it then they will give notice that is reasonable in the circumstances.

This informal agreement does not in any way negate our individual requirements to conform with GDPR regulations, and if, in the interests of this work, it becomes necessary to share information which is subject to GDPR restrictions, then a separate data sharing agreement relating will need to be completed.