

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Essex

There has been no feedback on the creation of Greater Essex Combined County Authority (GECCA) which was supposed to happen in May 2026.

However, this does not affect LGR which is still planned new unitary councils in May 2027 with such Cllrs taking control in April 2028 (when ECC and CCC are abolished). The format and number of such unitary councils has still not been finalised or published – so we don't know if Essex will become 3, 4 or 5 Unitaries. Many District Councils stated that they would not be able to manage the elections in May and still continue on the same timescales for LGR!

Highways

There are 3 ways to address defects:

1. Standard process of raising on Tell-Us – this covers all defects – pot-holes, pavements, signs, lighting, blocked drains, etc
2. ECC Cllrs adds to a defect to his Members Highways Initiative (MHI – which has been allocated extra funds) this covers potholes, pavements, drain covers, signs. It does not cover blocked drains. I have used up all of my MHI to the end of this term. It should start again post May 26.
3. Winter Maintenance – extra extra funds - only covers carriageway pot-holes. It appears to still have spare capacity. I have used it quite a lot. I need a photo and the Track-It reference

I tried adding the drains in Ford End to the MHI but were rejected as out-of-scope and a statement that they have been logged with the drainage team so it is in the system to be inspected.

On 4 separate occasions, I have chased the GWPC and CPC ATC surveys.

CCC Report:

Community Governance Review:

This review primarily seeks to consider whether the currently Chelmsford 'unparished' area would benefit from the introduction of a form of recognised community governance in light of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Essex. However, other matters, such as electoral arrangements, and the boundaries between the unparished area and adjacent civil parishes will also be included in the review.

Currently this is at the stage where the initial consultation feedback is ready to be considered by the working party (of which I am a member).

The timetable was discussed at the full council meeting of 25th March, and a proposal made to miss out the Governance Committee. I voted against this, but it went through.

The intent is to pull forward the Community Governance Order to put in place a central Chelmsford Parish, before the Unitary elections so that this is put in place before the Unitaries can rule it out!

The first phase consultation response was presented to the working party 10th March. There have been 601 responses – the unparished area is 51,000 electorate plus adjacent parishes were consulted. This is a round a 1% response rate which I think is poor but others seem to think is an acceptable response rate to proceed to the next stage of consultation, which will make a proposal for the structure of a Parish council in the centre of Chelmsford. I voted against this as I thought 1% is not significant enough to warrant a change, especially with all the unknowns of LGR!

Chelmsford City Council Scrutiny issue

Allocation of Capped Neighbourhood CIL from the Little Hollows Development

Background

The Little Hollows development generated a significant CIL receipt. Under national regulations, 15% is allocated as neighbourhood CIL, but this is capped according to the number of dwellings in the host parish prior to development. For Chignal Parish, this cap limits the neighbourhood allocation to £160,000.

A Cabinet report presented on 27 January set out how this capped sum should be spent.

Policy Wording

The Cabinet paper stated that the capped CIL balance:

“can only be spent on identified capital projects in the wards that immediately adjoin the Parish where the development has taken place, within the Parish itself, or within a Ward or Parish impacted by the development from which the CIL receipts arose.”

On its face, this wording permits consideration of projects in adjacent or otherwise impacted parishes, including Great Waltham, Roxwell, Pleshey, Writtle, and Broomfield.

When I sought clarification in the Cabinet meeting, the Leader stated that the funds were not intended for adjacent parishes. In my view, the interpretation contradicts the written policy. The exchange is not reflected in the minutes, and the meeting recording is unavailable due to technical issues.

Allocation Decision

Despite the policy wording, the subsequent agenda item allocated all capped CIL funds to projects in the central unparished area of Chelmsford. No evidence was provided that adjacent or impacted parishes were assessed, consulted, or invited to propose projects.

Examples of funded projects include air-conditioning for staff offices at CSAC (Melbourne Sports Centre), justified on the basis that residents of Little Hollows may use the facility. Equivalent or stronger arguments could be made for facilities in adjoining parishes.

Scrutiny Committee Call-In

A call-in was submitted, and the Scrutiny Committee considered the matter on 16 February. Key points arising from the discussion included:

- Officers and the Cabinet Member accepted that the policy wording is unclear and does not align neatly with national CIL guidance.
- It was confirmed that, in practice, the Council does not intend to make capped CIL available to adjoining parishes, despite the written policy suggesting otherwise.
- No process exists for identifying or assessing projects in adjacent or impacted parishes.
- The Council was unable to demonstrate that any such parishes had been considered.

A recommendation was proposed to refer the decision back to Cabinet to:

- clarify the policy, and
- establish a process for applying it.

This was voted down (6 Liberal Democrat councillors against, 4 Conservative councillors for).

Governance Observations

The current process places all stages of decision-making—project selection, Cabinet approval, and scrutiny—under the control of the same political group. All approved projects are located in wards represented by that group.

The Council now faces a mismatch between:

- its written capped CIL policy,
- national CIL expectations, and
- the actual allocation practice.

The policy remains as written and therefore continues to allow adjoining or impacted parishes to be considered!

Implications for Parish Councils

Given the wording of the adopted policy, adjoining parishes retain a legitimate basis to register interest in being considered for capped neighbourhood CIL where they can demonstrate impact from the Little Hollows development.

Great Waltham Parish Council has resolved to do so and is writing to the Leader and Cabinet Member accordingly. Other parishes may wish to consider similar representations, particularly where local facilities or infrastructure are demonstrably affected

Furthermore, GWPC submitted a written question to the CCC meeting of 25th Feb, requesting they be considered for the capped CIL. This question was not allowed to be tabled as CCC said they did not receive it, but when I queried this, they found it in the spam folder. I raised a “point of order” in the meeting as to how disappointed I was with the fact that they were able to ignore the question, even though it was received before the deadline and that it compounds the previous “technical fault” that also failed to record the Cabinet meeting of 27th Jan!

Broomfield PC have now also written to the Leader of CCC asking why they were not considered!