

LA / LEP INTEGRATION PLAN TEMPLATE

INTRODUCTION AND GUIDANCE

Government has [confirmed](#) that Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) core functions – namely, business representation, local economic planning, and the delivery of Government programmes where directed – from April 2024 should be delivered by local authorities.

This template is intended to aid the process of integration and inform the direction of any future government funding. This document should be read in parallel with the [guidance](#) published on the integration of LEP functions into local and combined authorities on 4 August 2023. Government expects decisions on the transfer and delivery of current LEP functions to be made locally.

Government expects functions to be delivered over current or potential devolution deal geographies so far as possible. Outside of areas with an agreed devolution deal, it is expected that functions will be exercised by the upper tier local authority, working with other upper tier local authorities as appropriate. Where multiple upper tier local authorities operate within an area, only one return is necessary. The authority which submits the return on behalf of the whole area should ensure all upper tier local authorities have agreed to the return and copy it to the LEP Chair.

It is recognised that the formal process of transferring any assets, loans, investments, or liabilities between existing LEP(s) and local democratic institutions will require agreement between both parties. All parties must follow the relevant laws and regulations that apply, including having due regard for the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Any commercially sensitive information may be submitted in parallel to the main integration plan. The use of annexes is also recommended for non-sensitive issues where more detail is required.

Completed plans should be sent to the central LEP Integration inbox (LEP.Integration@levellingup.gov.uk), copying all relevant parties (all upper tier local authorities and LEP Chair) and the relevant Area Lead in the Cities and Local Growth Unit.

The deadline for submission of this plan to Government is **23:59hrs on Thursday 30 November 2023** or earlier if possible, to help inform future funding decisions.

SECTION 1: CORE INFORMATION

Core details and current arrangements	
1.1 Name of LEP which is to be integrated.	South East LEP (SELEP)
1.2 Name(s) of upper tier authority or authorities into which LEP functions are being integrated.	Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council, Thurrock Council,
1.3 Current relationship with the LEP	<p>SELEP is registered as SELEP Ltd, a company limited by guarantee. The SELEP Ltd is nil return and acts through Essex County Council as Accountable Body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECC Leader is a board director for SELEP and also sits on the SELEP Accountability Board • ECC manages the contract for the Business Essex, Southend and Thurrock (BEST) Growth Hub on behalf of SELEP. • ECC collates monitoring information for Essex County Council based LGF, GBF and GPF projects on behalf of SELEP. • ECC is a Board Member of both Opportunity South Essex (OSE) and Success Essex Board (SEB) <p>Southend on Sea City Council is directly delivering a number of projects within the SELEP capital programme and collates LGF, GBF and GPF monitoring information on their behalf.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Leader of Southend on Sea City Council is a Board Director for SELEP and also sits on the SELEP Accountability Board. • The Council is also represented on Opportunity South Essex (OSE), one of the four federated boards which sit under the Strategic Board. <p>Thurrock Council is delivering a number of projects within LGF and GBF and collates monitoring information on their behalf. Thurrock currently has no active projects associated with GPF.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Leader of Thurrock Council is a SELEP Strategic Board Director and sits on the SELEP Accountability Board. • Thurrock Council is also represented on Opportunity South Essex (OSE), one of the four federated boards which sit under the Strategic Board.
Integration leads	
1.4 Contact details for integration leads	<i>[Please provide contact details for senior working-level contacts within local authority/authorities and the existing LEP(s)]</i>

ECC

Tristan Smith – Tristan.smith@essex.gov.uk

Lorna Norris - Lorna.Norris@essex.gov.uk

S151 - Stephanie Mitchener Stephanie.Mitchener@essex.gov.uk

Essex Legal - Susan Moussa Susan.Moussa@essex.gov.uk

Southend on Sea City Council

Tim Rignall, Capital Programme Manager –
timrignall@southend.gov.uk

Pete Bates, Deputy Director of Finance and S151 –
petebates@southend.gov.uk

Kim Sawyer, Director of Legal Services –
kimsawyer@southend.gov.uk

Thurrock

Kate Kozvola-Boran, Head of Employability & Skills -
KKBoran@thurrock.gov.uk

S151 – Steven Mair, Interim Director of Finance -
Steven.Mair@thurrock.gov.uk

Kevin Molloy, Legal Services-
KMolloy@thurrock.gov.uk

SELEP

Helen Russell – helen.russell@southeastlep.com

SECTION 2: GEOGRAPHY**Geography****2. Please set out the proposed geography for the delivery of LEP functions from April 2024.**

Answers should confirm whether the proposed geography is coterminous with the current LEP geography. If not, answers should confirm that the proposed geography constitutes a functional economic area (FEA), with reference to the size of population, local Travel To Work Areas (TTWAs) and any other relevant drivers of the local economy.

Where multiple upper tier local authorities operate across the proposed geography, you should confirm the governance arrangements and that service provision will be ensured across the whole geography – no authority should be left out and all parties should agree the arrangements.

The geography of Greater Essex as a UTLA lead is not coterminous with the current geography of SELEP, which also includes Kent (including Medway) and East Sussex. Greater Essex includes three UTLAs – Essex County Council, Southend on Sea City Council and Thurrock Council.

The proposed geography to integrate LEP Functions is across Greater Essex which has a combined population of 1,862,848 (2021 census) and a business base of 80,440 (UK Business Counts 2023). This geography covers:
Essex County Council - with a population of 1,506,345 and a business base of 66,520

Southend City Council - with a population of 180,601 and a business base of 7,025
Thurrock Council - with a population of 175,902 and a business base of 6,895

Greater Essex, as a Functional Economic Area, is currently working towards a Level 2 Devolution Deal. If a Devolution Deal is agreed with Government, it will be necessary for Greater Essex UTLA's to deliver interim arrangement across Greater Essex before LEP Functions move across to the proposed Combined County Authority (CCA). Should a devolution deal not be agreed with Government, the interim arrangements agreed will continue.

To ensure that LEP functions are delivered effectively over the potential devolved geography of Greater Essex prior to a Combined Authority being in place, Essex County Council, Southend on Sea City Council and Thurrock Council will establish a Partnership Agreement. This agreement will clarify how the UTLA's will work together to:

- Embed a strong independent and diverse business voice into local democratic institutions,
- Carry out strategic economic planning for Greater Essex
- Continue delivery of existing Government Programmes, including the Growth Hub.
- Take responsibility for and deliver new Government programmes (as directed)

As part of the Partnership Agreement UTLAs will set out arrangements for working closely with District Council partners across Greater Essex.

Approach to legacy Capital Programmes

It has been agreed that each of the UTLAs within the SELEP area will become the Accountable Body for legacy Capital projects (those awarded funding before 31st March 2024) within their geographical boundary from 1st April 2024. The three Greater Essex UTLAs agree that they will be responsible for the delivery and monitoring of the legacy Capital programmes within their areas and will undertake the functions that are currently undertaken by Essex County Council as the Accountable Body for SELEP.

Each upper tier authority will be accountable for providing the assurances and reporting to Central Government directly and will be responsible for any monitoring and reporting that relates to legacy Capital projects within their geographical areas. These arrangements include the ongoing management via a new Assurance Framework related to existing LGF, GPF and GBF funding programmes.

SECTION 3: BUSINESS VOICE

Current and future activity

3. Please set out how you intend to embed a strong, independent, and diverse local business voice into local decision-making across the area. Answers should cover the following points:

- (a) Proposed model & governance structure** (e.g., a stand-alone business board, sub-board, or other structure)
- (b) Membership** (including the mix, balance and diversity of independent business members and any other partners drawn from outside of the business community)

Proposed Model

Given the proposed Devolution Deal, Greater Essex UTLA's are already establishing new strategic relationships with businesses and will continue to work closely with these businesses to shape future arrangements. UTLA's will collaborate closely with business representative organisations, District Councils and other relevant partners to establish a new Business Board arrangement as part of the integration of LEP functions and to support future devolution arrangements. If there is no Devolution Deal, then arrangements will be developed with Greater Essex Leaders and Chief Executives alongside a new Business Board/Greater Essex Economic Partnership and shared economic ambitions. The outcome of Devolution discussions is still outstanding at the time of submitting this template.

New Business Board arrangements will replace the existing LEP arrangements, delivered through the federated boards of Success Essex and Opportunity South Essex. These arrangements will take into account further guidance expected from Government in January 2024.

A full open and transparent recruitment process will take place to create the new board. The Greater Essex UTLA's (and then the proposed CCA) providing management and secretariat functions for these arrangements.

Membership

While the structure and make up of the new Board, which will work closely with current Leader and Chief Executives and the future CCA when established and the associated policies (including Terms of Reference and Conflict of Interest) are still to be agreed the Board is likely to include:

- The Board will be representative of the economic regions of Greater Essex
- Mix of North/South Greater Essex businesses – to ensure that the geographical diversity of the County is fully represented providing a voice to urban, rural and coastal business as well as those linked to the economies of London and the Cambridge Corridor.
- Business intermediary organisations such as Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses
- LSIP Board Representation
- Sector representation with a focus on our strategic economic priorities
- Diversity in terms of business size
- EDI considerations


SECTION 4: PROJECTS, PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

Current and future activity

4.1 Please list the projects, programmes and services currently delivered by the local LEP. *In each case you should indicate whether, subject to receiving equivalent funding, the upper tier local authority/authorities would continue to undertake each activity. Where a different set of functions/services is being delivered for a neighbouring area, you should repeat the exercise for that area. You do not need to include LEP activity delivered in a private capacity.*

Title	Short Description (1-2 sentences)	Will the activity continue once the LEP is integrated? (subject to future funding)	
		Yes	No
Growth Hub	It is envisaged that the BEST (Business Essex, Southend and Thurrock) Growth Hub, which is currently managed by ECC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<p>on behalf of Greater Essex, will continue to be managed by ECC on behalf of Greater Essex via a direct contract with Government for 2024-25. This proposal is dependent on a timely announcement from the Govt for Growth Hub funding for 2024-25.</p> <p>Any arrangements beyond this date will depend both on an announcement of further funding and the position of the proposed CCA.</p>		
Economic Strategy	The three UTLA's will work together in line with Devolution objectives to develop an Economic Strategy for the proposed CCA.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring/Reporting on Legacy Capital Programmes	<p>Proposed to be managed by the three UTLAs with current responsibility for overseeing specific ongoing GPF, LGF and GBF projects.</p> <p>Any GPF funding available is likely to be held until the formation of the new CCA as amounts of funding and timescales available are not conducive to a quick reallocation. If there is no new CCA then the UTLAs working with the Greater Essex Business Board will design and publish a call for project proposals.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partnerships and Networks	<p>There are three groups which will continue to be resourced for an initial period of 12 months.</p> <p>Housing and Development Group (joint working link between business, public sector, DLUHC, Homes England and LGA)</p> <p>South East Creative Economy Network) (works to accelerate growth in the digital, creative and cultural sector</p> <p>Major Projects Group (Major projects across the SELEP Area)</p> <p>A further review of the arrangements for these three groups will be completed after 12 months.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clean Growth Group	This will be picked up through membership of the Greater South East Net Zero Hub. Greater Essex representation will be clarified in the Partnership Agreement. At time of submission there is only 1 seat for the SELEP area, it is therefore hoped that	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

	3 seats will be created to account for integrated LEP arrangements across the SELEP geography.		
Data and Intelligence	ECC, Southend and Thurrock will continue to produce relevant economic data and intelligence to support strategic planning.		

SECTION 5: DELIVERY AND APPROVALS

Governance of the integration process
5.1 (a) What mechanisms will be in place to manage the integration process at the local level?
<p>The Partnership Agreement will formalise mechanisms and arrangements to manage the integration process at a Greater Essex level. The agreement will clearly articulate the functions and responsibilities assigned to each UTLA and those which are to be completed at a Greater Essex level. Greater Essex is currently in discussion with Government around a Level 2 Devolution Deal and the precise nature of arrangements will be determined once those conversations are concluded. If a deal is concluded arrangements at a Greater Essex level will focus on a shadow Combined Authority until the new CCA is formally established from summer 2024 at the earliest. If there is no deal, then arrangements will focus on a Greater Essex Leaders and Chief Executives meeting alongside a new Greater Essex Business Board/Greater Essex Economic Partnership.</p> <p>Essex County Council is currently the Accountable Body for SELEP creating an understanding of the level of agreements, contractual obligations and responsibilities to Government that this entails. It is anticipated that transition and integration will be relatively smooth and timewise dependent on internal governance processes which in turn are reliant on Govt decisions.</p> <p>ECC, Southend on Sea City Council and Thurrock Council are working in conjunction with SELEP, Kent County Council (KCC), Medway Council and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to develop a comprehensive LEP transition plan. Recognising the differences in approach across each of the UTLA areas KCC, Medway, ESCC and the Greater Essex authorities are developing their own integration plans which detail how LEP functions will be delivered once SELEP ceases to exist on 31 March 2024. This involves supporting each of the five transition workstreams through officer engagement and regular meetings. This is subject to receiving equivalent funding enabling the upper tier local authority/authorities would continue to undertake each activity.</p> <p>Within ECC internal discussions are ongoing between the current delivery teams, Essex Legal Services, Essex Finance and the Accountable Body to ensure that the correct governance is in place with ECC to facilitate the handover of agreements between ECC and SELEP to be replaced by agreements between ECC and DLUHC.</p> <p>Officers from ECC, Southend and Thurrock are holding regular meetings to address the details behind each of the proposals above. These meetings look at an appropriate division of functions and the establishment of clear timelines both of which require regular Director and Member level engagement and agreement across the three partner UTLA's.</p> <p>Southend on Sea City Council has established an internal working group comprising S151, legal, HR and delivery teams to help ensure that robust arrangements are established in taking on LEP functions. These arrangements will also ensure that appropriate governance is in place and that key decisions are taken as appropriate. The Council has considerable experience in working with external funders to deliver capital projects/programmes and has well established processes and</p>

procedures in place to ensure that accurate and timely reports are prepared and that they have the necessary approvals. The Council has also stepped in to support Opportunity South Essex (as a federated board of SELEP) to 31 March 2024 and will ensure that the board has the opportunity to see and approve transition and integration plans. The next OSE Board meeting on 8 December 2023 will receive the SELEP transition plan, the Greater Essex Integration Plan and a copy of this template for approval.

Thurrock Council has allocated dedicated representatives to each of the 5 SELEP transition workstreams with additional specialist support from colleagues in finance, legal and HR. Decision making and governance are facilitated using Thurrock's existing governance processes and structures engaging senior leadership, S151, and elected Members. A full Cabinet review is scheduled for February 2024.

5.1 (b) If the existing LEP is intending to formally cease operation and dissolve following its integration, who will be responsible for managing the transition and any legacy issues?

ECC, Southend on Sea City Council and Thurrock Council are working in conjunction with SELEP, Kent and Medway and East Sussex to develop a comprehensive transition plan that identifies the functions to be transferred to UTLA's. Each area is working on its own Integration Plan recognising the differences in approach across each of the geographical areas. This involves supporting each of the five workstreams through officer engagement and regular meetings.

Essex County Council has requested to be released from its responsibilities as Accountable Body of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership with effect from 1 April 2024 and that any obligations in respect of monitoring capital projects not in its geographical area will cease on 1 April 2024, including any legacy obligations.

The Greater Essex Integration Plan makes it clear which functions are to be transferred to a 'new' Greater Essex arrangement and those which will be transferred to one of the UTLAs. The detail of future management arrangements depends, to an extent, on ongoing devolution conversations. If a deal is concluded, arrangements at a Greater Essex level will focus on transition arrangements until the new CCA is formally established. If there is no Devolution Deal, then arrangements will be developed with Greater Essex Leaders and Chief Executives alongside a new Business Board/Greater Essex Economic Partnership and shared economic ambitions.

It is proposed that from 1 April 2024, Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council shall each be the Accountable Body for legacy Capital projects within each of their respective geographical areas.

Each ULTA agrees that it shall perform and discharge all the obligations in respect of the capital projects in its geographical area with effect from 1 April 2024 and shall be the Accountable Body and responsible for any monitoring and reporting to Government directly in respect of any period on or before 1 April 2024 and thereafter.

At Southend the LGF, GBF and GPF capital programmes have already been integrated into existing governance processes including Capital Programme Delivery Board, Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet. These arrangements will be continued and enhanced to ensure that there is appropriate approval and sign off of returns to Government. The internal audit and finance teams will support the S151 Officer in signing off future returns.

At Thurrock the Capital Board oversees all capital programmes, including those funded by LGF, GBF and GPF. The Capital Board will oversee the set up of the Accountable Body function for

these funding streams and will continue to monitor delivery of the capital projects funded from these work streams. As with all returns to government, the s151 Officer will approve these.

Approvals

5.2 Has this integration plan been agreed by the relevant boards/persons in both the local LEP(s) and local authority/authorities?

Yes

No

Please copy all relevant parties (including the Chair of the local LEP(s)) when you submit this plan.

[Please provide further details, as required, on who is supporting the plan]

SELEP's Board agreed the first draft of its Integration Plan at a Strategic Board Meeting on 13 October 2023. Board members from ECC, Southend and Thurrock supported this decision. A final version will be presented to the Board on 8 December.

Work is now ongoing to develop a Greater Essex Integration Plan which provides assurance that appropriate arrangements have been made to take on the SELEP functions from 1 April 2024.

The integration plan is being developed by officers from Essex County Council, Southend on Sea City Council and Thurrock Council as the three UTLA's for Greater Essex. Each of the three authorities has slightly different arrangements for approval of the integration plan:

At ECC, this plan will be formally agreed politically through a Cabinet Member Action by January 2024, which will be approved by s151 as part of the governance process. The submission of this template has been endorsed by the ECC s151.

At Southend this template has been approved by the S151 Officer. This plan will be formally agreed politically through a Cabinet decision in January 2024. The speed of this work alongside the ongoing devolution conversations meant that it was not possible to achieve Cabinet approval prior to submission.

At Thurrock this template has been approved by the Interim Director of Finance s151 Officer and the Leader has been consulted. The template alongside Transition and Integration Plans will be submitted to 27 February 2024 Cabinet meeting for consideration.

The next OSE Board meeting on 12 December 2023 will receive the SELEP transition plan, the Greater Essex Integration Plan and a copy of this template for approval.