

4 September 2015

The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Dear Secretary of State

## **Devolution**

We are writing to follow up the letter we sent to the Rt Hon Sir Eric Pickles MP in March regarding our plans to pursue a combined authority.

During the course of the Spring and Summer we have been very open and transparent in pursuing a twin track approach to devolution. We have worked very closely with colleagues across Greater Essex and contributed fully to the emerging ideas and proposals contained in the letter signed today by all Essex authorities and ourselves. In particular we welcome the very strong emphasis placed on the role of growth areas that will form the basis for any future governance arrangements, enable decisions affecting South Essex to be taken locally and for delegations to the area to be maximised.

In parallel we have worked together with other South Essex authorities, including Essex County Council, on exciting and more bespoke devolution proposals for the Thames Gateway South Essex area. These build upon our strong track record of delivery, the significant ambitions we share for growth and the strength of our partnerships, including with the business community.

It is our intention over the coming weeks to further develop the ideas and proposals for South Essex in a way that will deliver real opportunity for our businesses and communities and which are able to 'fit' within the growth area structure, and its associated governance, set out in the Greater Essex letter.

We are pleased that the Greater Essex letter also draws a line under the protracted discussions about SELEP by committing to recognise and work with SELEP through the two federal area boards in Greater Essex: the Greater Essex Business Board and the Growth Partnership for South Essex. This will establish stability, ensure that SELEP and devolution work is aligned in South Essex, build confidence across the South Essex business community and create a powerful mechanism for business engagement in finalising and taking forward our devolution proposals.

We look forward to continuing our direct dialogue, alongside Greater Essex colleagues, with yourself and the Minister for Thames Gateway, as well as your officials, in finalising a devolution proposition for South Essex that is able to 'fit' within a Greater Essex submission to you later in the Autumn.

Yours sincerely



Cllr John Kent  
Leader, Thurrock Council



Cllr Ron Woodley  
Leader, Southend-on-Sea Council