

Leader's Office

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Dear Colleague

Councils across Essex want to see citizens, local groups and communities play a more active role in shaping where they live. We are writing as Leaders to invite you to come forward with ideas on how to improve your local communities.

We are keen to hear ideas on how we can support local people to play a greater role in improving their communities and enhancing local quality of life. We are also keen to find out about the barriers that communities face: the processes, regulations and bureaucratic rules that block social action and stop people playing a full part in society. We are eager to hear your ideas on how local and national government can act to reduce these barriers.

This call for ideas is open to everyone in Essex. We are keen to receive ideas from across our towns and villages. We encourage you, as community leaders and advocates to engage with your local communities, including hard-to-reach groups, in formulating any ideas you bring forward.

Where ideas relate to local authority functions, Essex councils will investigate these, exploring options for supporting new opportunities and reducing barriers where possible. Where ideas relate to central government activities, or to the rules and regulations that central government impose on local communities, Essex councils will champion these ideas with Ministers and government departments. We will, of course, keep you informed of the progress we make in taking your ideas forward.

By inviting communities to identify opportunities and barriers – and by trying to facilitate/reduce these – Essex local authorities are initiating a major change in the way government operates. There is, of course, a need to be realistic about the scope and scale of this change. For example, Essex authorities will need to ensure that any changes are:

- fair – councils cannot support ideas that disadvantage or limit the opportunities of specific individuals or groups;
- democratic – councils cannot support ideas undermining democratic processes; and
- achievable with existing resources – central government funding reductions mean that councils cannot commit additional money to new projects outside of any pre-existing grant programmes.

To help ensure that our limited resources are focused on developing the strongest community ideas, we have developed a set of criteria that will allow us to shortlist the ideas we receive. Details of these criteria, the process for assessing ideas and information on how to submit ideas can be found at www.essex.gov.uk/inspiringideas. Should you require hard copies of these documents please send your request to inspiring.ideas@essex.gov.uk or call 01245 434136.

Councils across Essex have fought long and hard to return power and influence to local people. We have done this because local people know what is best for their families, their neighbourhoods, their towns and their villages. This invitation signals a shared commitment to giving communities greater control over local decisions. It signals a desire to make government more open to the community.

We look forward to receiving your ideas and, through these, to realising the full potential of our communities.

Yours faithfully

Cllr Tony Ball
Leader, Basildon Borough Council

Cllr Peter Martin
Leader, Essex County Council

Cllr Graham Butland
Leader, Braintree District Council

Cllr Andrew Johnson
Leader, Harlow District Council

Cllr Louise McKinlay
Leader, Brentwood Borough Council

Cllr Penny Channer
Leader, Maldon District Council

Cllr Pam Challis
Leader, Castle Point District Council

Cllr Terry Cutmore
Leader, Rochford District Council

Cllr Roy Whitehead
Leader, Chelmsford Borough Council

Cllr Neil Stock
Leader, Tendring District Council

Cllr Anne Turrell
Leader, Colchester Borough Council

Cllr Jim Ketteridge
Leader, Uttlesford District Council

Cllr Di Collins
Leader, Epping Forest District Council