

**Committee:** Council

**Date:**

**Title:** Response to the Government on the Structural Change Order for Local Government Reorganisation: Urgent Executive Decision

Tuesday,  
24 February 2026

**Report Author:** Angela Knight, Chief Operating Officer  
[aknight@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:aknight@uttlesford.gov.uk)

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## Summary

1. The Council is required to respond to the Government's request for representations to the drafting of the Structural Changes Order that Government will prepare and lay before parliament later in 2026 to facilitate delivery of Local Government Reorganisation in Essex.
2. This report has been brought before full Council as a requirement of the Council's urgent executive decision process; the Council's response has been formalised via an urgent non-key executive decision, as set out in Rule 9 (Urgent Cabinet Decisions - Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules) of the [Council's Constitution, Part 4 – Rules of Procedure](#).

## Recommendations

3. To note that the decision (Appendix A) was taken under Rule 9 (Urgent Cabinet Decisions) of UDC's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

## Financial Implications

4. None in respect of the Council's response.

## Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None.

## Impact

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	The Chairman of Full Council has been informed in writing of the matter and has agreed that the decision is both urgent and reasonable.
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Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	This non-key executive decision has been processed in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 and Rule 9 (Urgent Cabinet Decisions) of UDC's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

## Situation

7. The government believes reorganising councils into a smaller number of single-tier unitary councils will deliver stronger local councils equipped to deliver high quality public services.
8. The government expects to set out their decision on which proposal they will implement in March 2026. The Structural Changes Order (SCO) will set out:
  - dates for transition
  - how the new unitary councils will be established (and current councils abolished)
  - how the new unitary councils will be initially established in 'shadow' form in 2027 and until they formally go-live in 2028
  - arrangements for elections
  - other transitional arrangements
9. Responding to this request for input ensures that the views of the council are considered in the drafting of the SCO.
10. The Council is looking to respond jointly with other councils in Greater Essex before the deadline on 17 February 2026. Due to the submission deadline, the response was formalised by an urgent executive decision on the morning of 17 February 2026. As far as officers are aware, none of the 14 other Essex councils jointly responding have been able to take their draft response through normal approval processes, because of the tightness of the Government's timetable.

## Risk Analysis

11.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
If the Council does not respond to the Government's request for representations, its views will not be taken into account regarding the SCO.	3	3	Respond to the Government's request for council representations on the SCO by the deadline of 17 February 2026.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.