

Scoping Report for Local Government Reorganisation Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group

Review Topic	Local Government Reorganisation
Scoping Report to go to meeting on	3 February 2026
Review to take place at meeting on	23 March 2027
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Petrina Lees, Leader of the Council
Lead Officer	Peter Holt, Chief Executive

Terms of Reference (to include the scope of the Review)	Purpose To provide oversight to the organisation's programme for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The LGR programme will aim to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we understand what data we hold, where and its quality. • we understand our 'as is' service delivery and processes. • we are ready to share and brief with future unitary partners. • we are confident in providing continuity of service during transition. • our staff and councillors are informed and supported, development is enabled and people are ready for change • we are prepared to contribute effectively to the future unitary-led authority to deliver "safe and legal" services on day 1 (1 April 2028) • we are able to identify and highlight opportunities for service improvement beyond "safe and legal" minimum required for 'day 1' • we are ready to positively influence and shape the 'Target Operating Model' of the new authority and to represent the needs and aspirations of Uttlesford residents, in particular the provision of social housing. • we are considering activity required to close down the existing council during 2028/29.
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Out of scope

- The process to shape and influence the future alignment of new unitary authorities in Essex (which will largely be settled before the initiation of this Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and which will be decided on by government.
- the separate but parallel Devolution programme for Greater Essex to which we have limited input and over which limited influence.
- Responsibilities and decisions that will be taken in due course by the elected members and officers of the newly constituted shadow authorities.

Constraints

- There are constraints of working within a system of 15 councils with disparate priorities and approaches
- As a small authority with limited capacity we have to be selective about activities that may not have direct priority or benefit for the programme or our business as usual responsibilities
- As a small authority with limited capacity, we will need to prioritise and phase our programme of work

Status

This is a Task and Finish Group of the Scrutiny Committee, established to provide oversight to planning and delivery of the organisation's LGR readiness programme. The group will review the programme design, monitor progress and produce a final report for the March 2027 Scrutiny Committee meeting, along with an interim report after approximately six months.

Membership

As per the Constitution, a minimum of three and a maximum of seven members can be appointed to a Task and Finish Group. Officers recommend four members (two Residents for Uttlesford, one Conservative and one Liberal Democrat). This provides a representative mix of political views and is sufficiently small to be agile

	<p>but still large enough to function if one member is absent. As it is a Task and Finish Group of the Scrutiny Committee, the membership can be limited to members of the Committee, although this is not a requirement.</p> <p>Attendance Officers will attend the Task and Finish Group as required, primarily the lead officer for the LGR readiness programme, and the relevant Programme Manager.</p> <p>The Group may invite other parties to attend and to contribute to meetings as it decides.</p>
<p>Purpose of the Review (what the review should achieve)</p>	<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hold cabinet members and officers to account and provide reassurance to members that the organisation is effectively preparing for LGR • To help officers and members prepare for the transition • To provide an interim report to the Scrutiny Committee on either 8 October 2026 or 19 November 2026 • To provide a final report to the Scrutiny Committee on 23 March 2027.
<p>Methodology / Approach (methods to be used to gather evidence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of best practice guidance as produced by the LGA • Review of organisation's LGR programme • Inputs to the group will primarily derive from information already being prepared for the inter-authority work and for other governance processes so as not to consume scarce officer resource and diminish capacity. • Review of LGR programme updates • Meetings to be noted and action lists produced. • Once it is clear which other authorities Uttlesford District Council is to merge with, the Group will likely want to explore potential joint Scrutiny arrangements with those councils.

Written Evidence Required	A formal report will be produced for the consideration of the Scrutiny Committee and to advise Cabinet.
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