

Our ref:  
Your ref:

Ask for:  
Dial:

Date: 12 January 2026

Corporate Director  
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Braintree  
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**To:** Alison McGovern

**By Email only:** [alison.mcgovern.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:alison.mcgovern.mp@parliament.uk) &  
[LGRElections@communities.gov.uk](mailto:LGRElections@communities.gov.uk)

Dear Ms McGovern

**Response to your letter to Council Leaders regarding Council elections in May 2026**

I am writing in response to your letter sent on 18 December 2025 to Council Leaders with elections scheduled to take place in May of this year.

Whilst Braintree District Council does not have scheduled elections, we do deliver any elections held in the district and we are part of the Devolution Priority Programme. In writing this response I have sought the views of all Members of this council regarding the issues you raised.

Braintree District Council has already begun preparations for the delivery of the elections to the eight divisions of Essex County Council that fall within our borders and both the Returning Officer, and I are confident that they can be served by our team.

The decision about whether to postpone elections is your own, but you must understand the implications it has. I share your ambitions on Local Government Reorganisation and the once in generation opportunity this offers us to reshape the provision of public services in Greater Essex. However, you should not underestimate the amount of work that needs to be done to ensure the transition from the current structures to the new is done in the most effective way possible to support service continuity and optimising the outcomes for our residents and businesses.

Your department's own indicative timeline shows there is only 16 months until elections to the Shadow Authorities. Within that period there are decisions to be made regarding LGR which must be taken by the decision makers in the current organisations. For those authorities that have elections in May 2026

there is a potential loss of up to two and half of months of decision-making time during the period between the start of the pre-election period and Council AGMs. This may present a significant risk to the LGR delivery programme, and we will need every hour to move smoothly from where we are now to the implementation of the Government's intended new structures.

We are working together to manage all the risks presented by this highly complex programme, both as a system of 15 councils across Greater Essex and within our own localities. Braintree District Council has established a strong partnership with Colchester City Council, Tendring District Council and Essex County Council, working closely together to ensure the best possible outcomes in the North East of Essex.

Therefore, I respectfully ask you Minister for an early decision on whether the elections in Greater Essex will be held in May so we may plan accordingly. I also request you to provide your "minded to decision" on the preferred option for the structures of local government in Greater Essex at the earliest opportunity. Finally, as part of that decision, it must be made clear whether the newly formed Essex County Council County Divisions, or a version of district wards, are to be used as the basis for the elections to the Shadow Authorities in May 2027. If it is to be the latter, there must be urgent guidance on how this can be implemented without a full boundary review so that we can provide assurance of a free and fair election.

I reiterate that Braintree District Council is fully supportive of the Government's policy of Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Essex, but it must be your decision whether holding the Essex County Council and other elections in May 2026 will help or hinder your ultimate ambitions for the smooth implementation of this policy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Graham', with a stylized, flowing script.

**Graham Butland**  
**Leader of the Council**