

# Essex County Council

## Ambitious Essex Enhanced Growth Hub

Issued 07/01/2026

Procurement Project - PL0117

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# 1. Essex County Council

Essex County Council is dedicated to improving Essex and the lives of our residents. Our ambition is to deliver the best quality of life in Britain. We will achieve this by providing high-quality, targeted services that deliver real value for money.

## 1.1. Everyone's Essex – Our plan for levelling up the county 2021 to 2025

1.1.1. Everyone's Essex sets out our 20 commitments for this four-year period.

1.1.2. We've focused on four areas where outcomes really matter for the quality of life for all people in Essex. They are:

- the economy
- the environment
- children and families
- promoting health, care and wellbeing for all ages

1.1.3. Embedded in our plan is a renewed commitment to addressing inequalities and levelling up life chances for residents. For information, visit; [Everyone's Essex: Equalities and levelling up.](#)

1.1.4. Most of all, it is our intention to work tirelessly in service of the people of Essex – they have put their trust in us, and we will not let them down.

1.1.5. A full version of our plan can be found at: [Everyone's Essex](#) or download the brochure as an accessible PDF: [Everyone's Essex](#) (PDF, 8.54mB).

## 1.2. Our 20 commitments

1.2.1. Our 20 commitments are divided into 4 key areas: economy, environment, health and family.

1.2.2. For more information on our 20 commitments across 4 key areas, visit; [Everyone's Essex: Our 20 commitments.](#)

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. As Essex prepares for devolution in May 2026, it must demonstrate its readiness to lead on economic development, investment attraction, and business growth. The UK Government's Modern Industrial Strategy, launched in June 2025, sets out a 10-year plan to increase business investment and grow the industries of the future.
- 2.2. This national strategy emphasises:
- Long-term certainty and stability for investors;
  - Support for regional clusters and city-regions to drive productivity;
  - Backing frontier industries such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and digital technologies;
- 2.3. Alongside, the launch of the Modern Industrial Strategy, in Summer 2025 the UK Government also launched the Business Growth Service. The Business Growth Service will make it easier to find and access the advice and support businesses need and will work in collaboration with Growth Hubs nationally to play a key role in providing local support in England, complementing business support from the UK Government and wider partners. Businesses will be able to access relevant support to help them start, grow and succeed. The support provided on the Business Growth Service site [www.business.gov.uk](http://www.business.gov.uk) is split into 4 stages:
- Starting a business
  - Running and growing a business
  - Selling overseas from the UK
  - Investing and expanding in the UK
- 2.4. The current Ambitious Essex Growth Hub and Backing Essex Business deliver SME support across Essex, helping businesses identify needs, access tailored advice, and grow in priority sectors. The type of support these services delivered, as outlined below, will continue to be delivered through a single service:
- Free triage and signposting
  - Strategic partnerships and ecosystem simplification
  - Sector-specific support (ECC's 5 growth sectors)
  - 1:1 business advice and finance support
  - Collaboration with industry and education
  - Innovation and product development guidance
  - Green technology adoption
  - Business skills consultancy and brokerage
- 2.5. The proposed updated business support service will directly support these aims and the priorities of the Council by:
- Supporting the focus on high-growth sectors by enabling SMEs to scale, innovate, and adopt new technologies.

- Driving productivity and competitiveness by providing tailored support that helps businesses overcome barriers to growth.
- Encouraging innovation and Research and Development (R&D) through targeted advice and access to relevant programmes and funding streams.
- Strengthening local economies by supporting job creation and inclusive growth across Essex.

- 2.6. Essex County Council (ECC) currently delivers business support through two main programmes: the **Ambitious Essex Growth Hub**, funded by the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), and **Backing Essex Business**, funded by ECC. While both services have been effective in supporting businesses across the county, feedback from the business community has consistently highlighted challenges in navigating the support landscape and identifying the most appropriate service for their needs.
- 2.7. With both contracts due to expire on 31st March 2026, ECC is taking the opportunity to reprocure and consolidate these services into a single, streamlined business support offer. This new service will be designed to simplify access for businesses, adapt to business needs, remove duplication, and deliver improved value for money.
- 2.8. To deliver a more streamlined and impactful business support offer, Essex County Council (ECC) launched the Essex Growth Agency (EGA [www.essexgrowthagency.co.uk](http://www.essexgrowthagency.co.uk)) on 5 November 2025, acting as a single front door for strategic investment, enterprise growth, and economic opportunity, the EGA is the new business-facing gateway and the growth and investment arm of ECC. It plays a pivotal role in driving economic development across the region by supporting business success and sector growth, connecting enterprises with the right opportunities, promoting trade, and attracting strategic investment. A key component of this new agency is the Ambitious Essex Growth Service, which will be delivered as a central pillar of the EGA offer and form an integral part of the EGA brand.
- 2.9. The delivery of the **Ambitious Essex Growth Hub**, as specified in this tender, will form part of a broader, integrated business support offer delivered through the **Essex Growth Agency (EGA)**. This service will contribute to the EGA's mission of providing a cohesive, one-stop shop for business growth and investment across Essex. Additional business support programmes aligned with the **Ambitious Essex** campaign may be commissioned in the future to complement and enhance this service, further strengthening the EGA brand and its strategic offer to businesses.
- 2.10. This approach reflects ECC's commitment to delivering a more coherent and impactful business support ecosystem, better positioned to meet the needs of Essex's large and diverse SME base and to drive inclusive economic growth across key sectors.
- 2.11. The supplier will deliver the service across the Greater Essex area, running for a period of 36-months commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.
- 2.12. Bids can be from a single organisation, a partnership, a consortium, or a lead entity with sub-contracting; this will be at the supplier's discretion.

## 3. Background

- 3.4. From April 2024 the former functions of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) - including responsibility for delivery of Growth Hubs transferred to Local Authorities. Essex County Council (ECC) took on these functions for Greater Essex in partnership with Southend-On-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council.
- 3.5. Business support is a key component to increasing productivity for growth, by encouraging capital investment, use of technology, employing and developing skilled labour, improving business and management practices and embedding innovation. It also aims to support new job growth through start-up and scale-up support and by targeting those sectors strategically important to the local area.
- 3.6. Growth Hubs are an established business support service, which provide free and impartial signposting, information, and advice to all businesses looking to succeed, helping them to navigate the national and local support landscape. It is Government grant funded annually by the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and provides a one stop shop for business support services that offers:
- Information, navigation, and signposting via a coordinated, multi-channel service
  - One-to-one structured support to small and medium enterprises, incorporating a diagnostic assessment of business needs and advice and guidance.
- 3.7. The current Backing Essex Business programme has been delivered for the past 5 years and was one of the key initiatives that was developed as a response to the Economic Recovery Programme following the Covid-19 pandemic with the aim to provide direct assistance to local businesses.
- 3.8. Existing provision is focussed on delivering a programme of business support to help safeguard businesses and jobs, providing high quality advice and finance raising interventions to enable growth across Essex, business skills consultancy and brokerage with a focus on key sectors important to Essex's economy.
- 3.9. New provision will recognise and directly support the position and profile of ECC as a strategic leader for investment and support in the area whilst complementing other local, regional and national business support.
- 3.10. In July 2025, ECC conducted a business survey (Info\_Doc\_Survey Brief) to inform what the new business support service should include in its provision. The research engaged with 87 businesses in Essex, across different sectors and size, to understand the type of support that is required.

- 3.11. Interim findings indicated that business support remaining crucial with survey results showing that the most essential business support needs include:
- Financial support (39%)
  - Advice and Guidance (28%)
  - Market access and Business Accelerators (25%)
- 3.12. In August 2025, ECC conducted Preliminary Market Engagement via a survey to potential suppliers of the service. There were 30 respondents and the intelligence gathered has helped shape the service.
- 3.13. The research identified that businesses face obstacles to get support, struggle to find relevant information and the support system needs improvement.
- 3.14. ECC is seeking a new service to address these needs. The service should be flexible to adapt to business needs, communicate clearly and offer support in various ways. The goal is to boost business performance, create and safeguard jobs, and help businesses seize opportunities to grow. This in turn will help to make Essex a place where people start businesses, grow businesses, and locate their businesses.
- 3.15. Economic uncertainty means that specifying a rigid set of requirements for provision of business support is impossible. Therefore, the supplier will be required to work flexibly with ECC to determine the most appropriate focus of support delivered throughout the contract. This may result in a change in elements of delivery of the contract such as sectors of focus, types of support provided, and methods of delivery and the supplier will be expected to act swiftly.
- 3.16. A localised business survey (See 3.10) provided useful insights into the essential requirements and specialised activities that a 'one-stop shop' offer should provide as accompaniments to a general business support service. Specialised support offers are out of scope for this tender and will be determined by market need and advertised accordingly.
- 3.17. Essex County Council has several other contracts/stakeholders that this contract will interlink with:
- **The Essex Growth Agency** is a strategic initiative focused on driving sustainable economic development across Essex. It works to attract investment, support business innovation, and foster inclusive growth by collaborating with local authorities, private sector partners, and educational institutions. The agency plays a key role in enabling businesses to scale, access new markets, and contribute to the region's prosperity. Through targeted programmes and sector-specific support, it aims to position Essex as a dynamic hub for enterprise and opportunity.
  - **The UK Government's Business Growth Service** is a centralised support platform for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), offering streamlined access to funding, expert advice, and export opportunities through a single digital hub at

business.gov.uk. Developed with local partners, it aims to reduce administrative burdens and help businesses focus on growth.

- **Essex Connect to Work** is a free, voluntary programme supporting residents of Essex, Southend-on-Sea, and Thurrock who face barriers to employment. It offers tailored one-to-one help with job searching, CVs, interviews, and access to local opportunities. Participants can also receive training aligned with employer needs and support for issues like mental health, housing, or addiction.
- **Essex Skills Bootcamps** are free, flexible training programmes for adults aged 19+, helping them gain in-demand skills in 12–16 weeks. Funded by the Department for Education and delivered by Essex County Council, they support career progression, job entry, or staff upskilling in areas like digital, construction, health and social care, and business. Many courses include a guaranteed interview, and employers can enrol staff at subsidised rates.

## 4. Scope

- 4.1. The UK Government recognises that local economies are reliant on strong businesses to provide sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation and funds the national Growth Hub service to continue to support this goal.
- 4.2. The government's [English Devolution White Paper, Power and Partnership: Foundations for Growth](#), published on 16 December 2024, states that the government wants all remaining two-tier areas in England to be eventually restructured into single-tier unitary authorities and is termed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). This reorganisation is part of a broader devolution strategy to simplify local government structures, save public funds, and improve local accountability. LGR will impact the County of Essex as it currently operates a two-tier Local Government structure.
- 4.3. It is anticipated, that during the life of this contract, the LGR process will commence and/or progress potentially impacting this contract. Impacts may include, but are not limited to, modifications such as a transfer of the legal entity you currently contract with, significant increases and/or decreases in the value/volume of services required due to the change in size/scope of the Contracting Authority, and/or changes to the scope of the nature of services required. Although any contract scope changes should broadly relate to the nature of the existing scope, new services of a related nature may be required that were not previously included.
- 4.4. The scale and exact timing of the changes are unknown at this point, but it is known that LGR will impact the County of Essex. All suppliers who work with the Authority need to be

aware and where possible, work with the Authority to adapt to any changes/modifications as required to ensure smooth transition and continuity of services.

- 4.5. The primary purpose of the procurement opportunity is to deliver the Ambitious Essex Growth Hub with enhanced Business Support service and provide all businesses across Essex, Southend and Thurrock authority areas, no matter their size or sector with access to advice and support via a free, impartial, 'single point of contact'. This will enable businesses to access appropriate support services to help them grow, improve productivity and create local economic impact.

### **Ambitious Essex Growth Hub**

- 4.6. To provide Growth Hub support to a minimum of 600 unique businesses across the economic area between 1 April 2026 and 31 March 2027 through a mix of light (< 1hour), medium (1 to 12 hours) and high (> 12 hours) intensity support. Exact percentage splits can be found in section 6.14.2 and Info\_Doc\_Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Growth Hubs (FY 2025-26).
- 4.7. The supplier must provide for the following key service elements, which align to the principles of Growth Hub funding as set out by DBT.
- 4.8. **Triage, diagnostics and signposting:** to encourage more businesses to take up external advice by providing access to a free and impartial local 'single point of contact' prioritising those businesses with the opportunity, ambition and greatest potential to grow.
- 4.8.1. Deliver an operating model that provides a clear customer journey, customer custodianship and provides different levels of support appropriate to enquiry and potential outcomes, using a range of different intervention types to meet the requirements of businesses
- 4.8.2. Carrying out marketing and engagement activities and events: To increase the reach and take up of business support services across the defined delivery area.
- 4.8.3. Administering the business information portal comprising:
- The dedicated Ambitious Essex Growth Hub Website
  - Web Chat function (which can be adopted free of charge from the National Business Support Helpline)
  - Telephone Service 9.00am-5.30pm Monday to Friday and a call back response time of within 48 hours

- Branded email inbox and response service
- Social media (e.g. Linked In, Facebook)

#### 4.8.4. Running the business navigation service including:

- Provision of direct or digital information, advice and signposting from a business navigator or advisor
- Referrals to other sources of business support, skills consultancy and skills brokerage services.
- Advice on specific and/or current issues
- Aftercare & follow up post referrals

#### 4.8.5. Engaging in proactive promotion of programmes (public and private) to:

- Enable more businesses to access new market opportunities including trading internationally
- Stimulate business investment in science, R&D and innovation, and encourage adoption of new technologies and management best practice
- Enable more businesses to source the right people, access apprenticeships and develop workforce skills
- Increase business awareness and participation in public procurement and major infrastructure projects

4.9. **Strategic partnerships and business support simplification:** to build and strengthen relationships with key local and national providers to exploit opportunities for collaboration and to further join up and simplify the local business support ecosystem and customer journey for the end-user. To include:

4.9.1. Embed and promote the Ambitious Essex Business Growth Service Brand for the service and deliver marketing and business engagement activity to maximise impact.

4.9.2. Making referrals to and from other national and local business support providers.

4.9.3. To be able to respond and deal with changing and future calls to act as the primary front door to businesses seeking support from emerging programmes, locally, regionally and nationally such as Made Smarter. This must be carried out within the timescales and parameters laid down by the different funding organisations.

4.9.4. Communication with district councils from across Greater Essex to understand their own business support provision and links into this via the Growth Hub service.

- 4.9.5. Communication with the other local and national Growth Hubs to look for areas of best practice and where possible collaboration opportunities.
- 4.9.6. Formal working relationships and processes with national and local providers including the National Business Support Helpline, Innovate UK (IUK) and IUK Edge, Department for International Trade (DiT), Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN), British Business Bank, Intellectual Property Office (IPO), business intermediaries, banks, investors, Institute of Chartered Accountants, and Universities.
- 4.9.7. Attend and present updates at the quarterly Growth Hub Steering Group which is led by ECC and engaging with and reporting as and when required to the Greater Essex Business Board (GEBB). The steering group is made up of representatives from ECC, Southend and Thurrock Councils, district economic development officers, and representatives from business.
- 4.10. The services provided must be free at the point of entry and equitably accessible to all businesses registered in, operating from or wishing to relocate into the defined delivery area. The supplier must signpost clients who do not meet these criteria to appropriate alternative provision.
- 4.11. The supplier must demonstrate via an engagement plan with timescales on how the service will be effectively delivered across all local districts and unitary authorities, detailing how the service will be offered (e.g. physically and/or virtually).
- 4.12. The supplier cannot use the funding to make direct grants to businesses or to support/promote any commercial and/or fee-charging services operated by the Growth Hub.
- 4.13. The supplier must, in all communications, engagement, marketing and promotional activity adhere to the latest versions of the Growth Hub Branding Guidelines. Copies of these documents are accessible as appendices to this specification (Info\_Doc\_Growth Hub Branding and Communications Guidelines 2025-2026) and may be updated from time to time.
- 4.14. The supplier will have the opportunity to work with Essex County Council to ensure that all service activities are compliant with the Terms and Conditions of the Growth Hub Grant Funding agreement between DBT and ECC.

### **Enhanced Business Support Services**

- 4.15. The enhanced Business Support service will provide additional support beyond the Ambitious Essex Growth Hub offer, with a clear priority given to working with businesses located within the Essex County Council geographic boundary. This targeted approach aims to create and safeguard jobs, drive business growth, and improve productivity, ensuring that Essex-based enterprises benefit first and foremost.
- 4.16. This should be achieved through a range of interventions to be agreed with ECC during the implementation phase. These interventions may include, but are not limited to the following:
- Providing direct support to ECC's key growth sectors (Advanced Manufacturing, Construction & Retrofit, Digitech, Clean Energy, Life Sciences, Visitor Economy) sectors, and / or to those cohorts who it's been identified as those with high growth potential.
  - Delivery of short term business support interventions to focus on supporting business in relation to the impact of changing economic conditions
  - Delivery of medium/long term support interventions to focus on business/jobs growth and business survival.
  - Understand the economic conditions and support requirements of businesses to proactively develop and tailor the support delivered.
  - Supporting partnering and collaboration opportunities between SME's and major industries and educational institutions
  - Assisting businesses to pivot, innovate, improve productivity, diversify, and adopt new technologies where appropriate.
  - Supporting product development
  - Supporting and advising businesses to implement, adopt, deliver, and develop green technologies.
  - Helping businesses to understand and improve their own social value contribution and signposting to appropriate tools.
  - Ensuring businesses consider accessibility requirements to ensure their products and services are available to all and signpost to appropriate services.
- 4.17. Recent economic challenges have shown that being too prescriptive in this specification will reduce the agility and flexibility of the service, to the changing needs of businesses and to the changing economic priorities of ECC. The supplier is therefore expected to proactively design, develop and tailor the support interventions delivered to businesses throughout the contract in consultation with ECC officers.
- 4.18. Suppliers will need to show an ongoing understanding of the local business challenges and what support they need. This should include details of the proposed delivery model and how it will address these needs.
- 4.19. The supplier should look to apply learning from similar programmes, such as target audience, key sectors, delivery models and up-take demographics.
- 4.20. The supplier will provide support to beneficiary businesses in all sectors, but with a specific aim to encourage job growth and retention in sectors of specific relevance to ECC and the

growth of the Essex Economy as set out in the Economic Growth Plan. The supplier will retain an element of flexibility to ensure that if priorities change for ECC they can refocus their offer in line with emerging priorities.

- 4.21. The customer experience and the navigation of customers is critical to the success of the service. A clear issue of businesses being unaware of available support and not having the appropriate information to be able to access it, still remains. Therefore, the new service must ensure exceptional communications to business, utilising marketing and partnership arrangements, including working closely with the Essex Growth Agency communications and marketing teams as well as other partners and district authorities.
- 4.22. ECC will nominate a designated Contract Manager as the main contact for project management and contract management meetings will be held monthly.
- 4.23. The Supplier will be required to utilise ECC’s internal CRM system, which is currently Alcium CRM system (Evolutive) provided by ECC for the recording and managing of service outcomes and activity delivery. This system will be accessible at all times to ECC in order to manage performance and delivery of outputs, as well as identify opportunities for collaboration or development of future, related initiatives.
- 4.24. All enquiries, information on businesses supported and referrals will be channelled through ECC’s CRM to ensure full monitoring and evidence gathering is in place. ECC will hold administrator rights and be the data owner for the CRM and will have the full system overview to ensure that referrals are being channelled appropriately.
- 4.25. ECC has considered this procurement in relation to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (the Regulations). ECC’s preliminary view is that those Regulations apply to the transfer of activity envisaged by the award of the Contract. This is a preliminary view only and ultimately whether the Regulations apply is a matter of law. Suppliers are therefore advised to seek their own independent legal advice on whether or not the Regulations apply. Suppliers must indicate whether or not their tender is submitted on the basis that the Regulations do or do not apply.
- 4.26. The contract will be for a 36-month period, to commence delivery on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 with a break clause after each 12 months on the anniversary of the commencement date.

## 5. Key dates

Stage	Date/Time
Invitation to Tender (ITT) Issued	07/01/2026
ITT Clarification Deadline	21/01/2026 – 16:00
ITT Submission Deadline	02/02/2026 – 12:00 Noon
Commencement date	01/04/2026
Contract Expiry date	31/03/2029
Contract duration	3 year(s) 0 month(s)

## 6. Statement of Technical Requirements

- 6.1. The indicative requirement is that suppliers will be able to assess, design, deliver and evaluate the necessary interventions and associated administration activities required to deliver the programme and to meet the required outcomes.
- 6.2. There is an expectation that suppliers will clearly articulate their skills, competencies and experience of the required delivery techniques, use of best practice, fit for purpose methodologies, bring innovation, and incorporate technology to demonstrate their suitability as well as to quote affordable rates to maximise the return on investment.
- 6.3. Successful suppliers will be required to produce a delivery plan specifying programme plan and timeline, aims and objectives, and outcome profiles.
- 6.4. There is an expectation that suppliers will demonstrate their commitment to deliver improvements to the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of Essex.
- 6.5. There is an expectation that suppliers will demonstrate their commitment and ability to operate in a carbon responsible way, to contribute to the UK's statutory 2050 net-zero target.
- 6.6. Performance measurement targets, monitoring KPIs and evaluation arrangements – approaches and metrics are set out within the specification and terms and conditions, along with milestones and deliverables.
- 6.7. The supplier will submit implementation, and mobilisation plans as part of their tender submission. There will be finalisation and agreement of the plans submitted by the bidder following award of contract.
- 6.8. The successful supplier is to ensure that all marketing, references, and delivery of the programme(s) include clear acknowledgement of this being funded by ECC, including use of the ECC brand.
- 6.9. The successful supplier will maintain and develop:
  - A clear understanding of individual markets/segments, an awareness of the issues and opportunities present in priority sectors, and a familiarity with relevant networks, clusters, and local business support.
  - A clear understanding of the support environment already in place in Essex and an awareness of the importance / impact of being able to offer holistic support to clients.

- An understanding of how it can help The Authority to deepen its understanding of local strengths and opportunities, networks, and gaps in the local support offer.
- An understanding of the vocational and technical education landscape locally and nationally, including the role of Essex Chambers of Commerce and the Local Skills Improvement Plans.

#### 6.10. **IS Information Handling and Security**

- 6.10.1. Bidders will be required to complete the Data Protection Compliance Questionnaire as provided in the Provider Specific Questionnaire (PSQ).
- 6.10.2. Bidders will be required to adhere to the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and UK General data Protection Regulations.
- 6.10.3. The preferred bidder may be required to provide evidence of its security policy / policies following award of contract.
- 6.10.4. The supplier must use the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) currently Evolutive provided by Alcium Software for the collection and management of all requisite data and metrics. The licence required to use the CRM is pre-paid by ECC. Access will be granted to the provider on award of contract.
- 6.10.5. Data processing by the supplier must comply with the General Data Processing Regulations, relevant clauses within the Contract, and associated Data Sharing Protocols agreed locally. The data collected must meet the requirements of the Growth Hub Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which includes Protected Characteristics data. A copy of this document is accessible as an appendix of this specification (Info\_Doc\_Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Growth Hubs (FY 2025-2026)). Note that this may be updated by DBT during the project.
- 6.10.6. The supplier must obtain permission from each business to share any and all data they collect as part of the Growth Hub project with ECC.
- 6.10.7. It is expected that information held on the CRM will be used to provide evidence of delivery in support of monthly progress reports.

- 6.11. **Continuous / Expected improvement** - Feedback in both directions will be encouraged throughout the contract. Contract Review Meetings will be held monthly, quarterly and 12 months after the Commencement date and annually thereafter. The annual meetings will reflect on successes and lessons learned and agree actions for both parties over the remainder of the agreement that may deliver improved value for money.

6.12. **Intellectual Property Rights** - Copyright, patent rights or other intellectual property rights and title in any material specifically created for the Authority as part of the delivery against these requirements shall vest in the Authority unless otherwise expressly agreed or approved by the Authority in writing.

6.13. **Standards** No standards relating to this requirement.

6.14. **Performance, targets, and monitoring arrangements** - All KPIs will have a focus on quality outcomes. These indicators are minimum requirements and will continue to be reviewed through the contract management processes and may be modified by agreement.

**6.14.1 KPIs – For Management of Contract performance** – These indicators will hold contractual/financial implications as stated within the terms and conditions. Definitions are included in the tender pack, titled ‘Info\_Doc\_KPI Definitions’.

Area	KPI Ref	KPI	Year 1 (12 months)	Year 2 (12 months)	Year 3 (12 months)
Enhanced Business Support Service	EBS03	Jobs Created/Safeguarded	300 (min)	400 (min)	500 (min)
	EBS04	Sector-Specific business supported	150 or 50% (whichever is higher)	225 or 60% (whichever is higher)	300 or 70% (whichever is higher)
Core Growth Hub Delivery	GH01	Number of unique businesses supported	600 (min)	650 (min)	700 (min)

**6.14.2 KPIs - For Management of Contract performance** – These indicators will **not** hold contractual/financial implications as stated within the Terms and Conditions. Definitions are included in the tender pack, titled ‘Info\_Doc\_KPI Definitions’

Area	KPI Ref	KPI	Year 1 (12 months)	Year 2 (12 months)	Year 3 (12 months)
	GH02	Number of low intensity engagements	40%	40%	40%

	GH03	Number of medium intensity engagements	50%	50%	50%
	GH04	Number of high intensity engagements	10%	10%	10%
	GH05	Events held to engage directly with business community	10 (min)	10 (min)	10 (min)
	GH05	Customer satisfaction	98%	98%	98%
Enhanced Business Support Service	EBS01	Number of businesses supported to enable growth, improve productivity or mitigate impacts arising from economic challenges	150	200	250
	EBS05	Case Studies Produced	10	10	10

**6.14.3 Monitoring Indicators (MI's)** – These indicators will hold no financial implications, but the supplier will still be expected to show performance against targets on a monthly basis. Essex County Council reserves the right to publish performance against MI's as part of the evaluation of the service.

Area	KPI Ref	KPI	Year 1 (12 months)	Year 2 (12 months)	Year 3 (12 months)
Core Growth Hub Delivery	GH06	Website Traffic (Growth in visits to Growth Hub digital platform)  *Baseline to be confirmed	+20% year on year	+20% year on year	+20% year on year
Enhanced Business Support Service	EBS02	High-Growth Firms Supported	10	15	20
	EBS06	Referrals to local/national support programmes	300 (min)	300 (min)	300 (min)
	EBS07	Number of businesses supported to develop new products (to business/to market)	30	40	40
	EBS08	Number of businesses supported to access Public Sector procurement opportunities.	20	30	30

	EBS09	Proportion of businesses who have not received any form of business support before	50%	60%	60%
	EBS10	Businesses supported to realise growth opportunities from the net zero carbon agenda	15	20	20

**6.14.4** ECC will carry out periodic surveys of businesses supported with an expected average of 75% of responses to be “Satisfactory” or “Very Satisfactory”.

**6.14.5** Additional Information for Reporting - The supplier should also detail within their monthly performance reports the following:

- Number of enquiries by type of support required.
- Number of enquiries by size/sector of business.
- Lead generation source, i.e., through business intermediaries, events etc.

**6.15 Contract Management and Monitoring** - The outcomes identified within this section are the minimum acceptable outcomes for the tender response to be accepted. These outcomes are to be used as baselines for suppliers to suggest stretch targets in the form of outputs above the minimum requirements.

**6.15.1** Stretch targets submitted by the suppliers exceeding the minimum acceptable outcomes will be reviewed for robustness and agreed by ECC prior to the contract commencement and appropriately reviewed during the contract.

**6.15.2** The supplier will be managed against a set of 10 Management KPIs, as set out in 6.14.1 and 6.14.2 of the specification, of which three of the targets have financial implications. Suppliers will be expected to show performance against the targets, as apportioned in the schedule within the Terms and Conditions and measured on a quarterly basis. A deduction to the next quarters payments will be made for any KPI where the actual performance in the quarter is lower than the quarterly target for that KPI.

**6.15.3** Suppliers will be asked to provide a set of robust reports containing updates against the Management KPI’s, Monitoring KPIs and the additional information on a monthly basis, in a format agreed between the supplier and ECC. These reports will need to be delivered, one week prior to the monthly contract meeting with the ECC contract manager and any other staff members identified.

**6.15.4** Contract meetings will be arranged by ECC and scheduled on a recurring monthly basis on a day and time agreed between the supplier and ECC. This can be rearranged

with prior notice (at least 2 days before).

**6.15.5** Evidence will be required regularly to support performance, in a format agreed between the supplier and ECC.

**6.15.6** ECC officers may undertake sample audits.

**6.15.7** By mutual agreement these service levels may be modified during the contract period. The performance measures will be reviewed at 6 monthly intervals.

**6.16** **Exit Plan** – The preferred bidder shall complete an exit plan following award of contract, this may include (but is not limited to);

**6.16.1** Hand-over process, transition between providers

**6.16.2.** Software and Licences

**6.16.3.** Intellectual Property Rights

**6.16.4.** TUPE

**6.16.5.** Support arrangements

**6.16.6.** Information Security & GDPR

**6.17.** **Implementation/mobilisation** - the Supplier is required to meet with the Authority as per the delivery timeline set out in Section 5 in order to agree a mobilisation and implementation plan for the service. This will include but is not limited to:

- Required meetings
- Project Plan
- Risk Register
- Timeline
- Communications and marketing plan

**6.18.** **Health and safety requirements**

**6.18.1.** In accordance with Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 2(3), please confirm that you have a written Health & Safety Policy that has been signed by the responsible person for the company within the last 12 months. This should include the organization and arrangements in place to implement the policy.

**6.18.2.** Please confirm that you have access to competent Health & Safety advice in accordance with regulation 7 of Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

**6.19.** **Training requirements** – To ensure representation at knowledge sharing session/training opportunities via the Regional Growth Hub Cluster. These will be shared with the provider via the ECC Contract Management Team.

## **7. Business Continuity Plan (BCP)**

The successful Bidder is required to provide their compliant BCP within 5 working days of the Contract Award, or at a later time within the Contract Mobilisation phase, if agreed in advance with the ECC Contract Manager.

A compliant BCP must meet the requirements of the following six categories:

<b>Category</b>
<b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities:</b> The plan clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of different individuals and teams involved in the response to a business continuity incident
<b>Command &amp; Control:</b> The plan establishes a clear command structure for coordinating the response to the incident.
<b>Communication:</b> The plan identifies how internal and external stakeholders will be contacted.
<b>Threats &amp; Hazards:</b> The plan identifies key threats and hazards that could impact the provision of service.
<b>Recovery Strategies:</b> The plan clearly identifies strategies to recover from differing impacts.
<b>Contact Information:</b> The plan has evidence that key contact details are contained and that secondary points of contact are identified.

Each of these categories will be reviewed by ECC and marked as **Satisfactory**, **Satisfactory with Advisories** or **Not Satisfactory**.

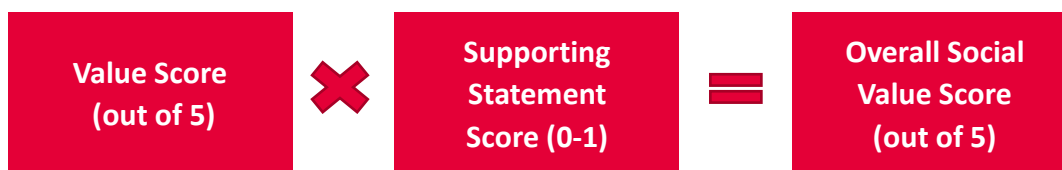
**Satisfactory** - Will require no further action but will be monitored throughout the life of the contract through Contract Management and Contract Compliance Audits.

**Satisfactory with Advisories** - Will require further discussion and agreement during the Contract Mobilisation phase and will be monitored throughout the life of the Contract through Contract Management and Contract Compliance Audits.

**Unsatisfactory** - Will require the Supplier to revise and resubmit the BCP to meet the specified criteria and be compliant. If the revised BCP does not meet the minimum standard of 'Satisfactory with Advisories' there will be one further opportunity to resubmit. Failure to meet the required standard at this point could result in the termination of the contract.

## 8. Social Value

- 8.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires public authorities to “*have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public service contracts; and for connected purposes.*” Essex County Council wishes to work collaboratively on social value with our suppliers, partners, and the community to benefit Essex.
- 8.2 In line with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, Essex County Council has published a Social Value policy stating that the authority must consider *and* evaluate the wider financial and nonfinancial value created through our day-to-day activities in the delivery of contracts and express it in terms of the wellbeing generated for individuals, communities, the economy, and the environment.
- 8.3 Essex County Council has adopted the Themes, Outcomes and Measure (‘TOMs’) method of classifying and evaluating Social Value, adapted to the County’s context and priorities, based on the ECC Corporate Strategy ‘Everyone’s Essex’.
- 8.4 Social Value is given a weighting of up to 20% (higher in some circumstances) and is evaluated in two parts, which, when combined result in one overall Social Value score:
- Value Score (calculated using the ECC TOMs Calculator).
  - Supporting Statement



- 8.5 As the Social Value commitments will form part of the contract there is a requirement for the fulfilment of Social Value commitments and reporting of progress throughout the contract term. Based on their supporting statement and ECC TOMs Calculator bid, the Contractor shall produce and maintain a Social Value Plan that provides details of the Social Value commitments to be delivered each Contract Year and over the Contract Term.
- 8.6 The Contractor shall complete and return quarterly Social Value reports detailing commitments delivered as part of their Social Value Plan. Quarterly Social Value reports shall be completed and returned no later than ten (10) Business Days after the request is received.
- 8.7 The Contractor shall report annually as part of the Annual Service Report on Social Value delivered in Contract Year.
- 8.8 Social Value will be included in the performance management arrangements as a Management Indicator. Failure to deliver against the committed plan will result in performance improvement plans and/or rectification plans as required.
- 8.9 For more information on Social Value, including the full list of ECC’s TOMs, Social Value examples, and bidders’ guidance, you can find our Social Value Catalogue here: [Social Value Catalogue | Provider Hub | Essex \(essexproviderhub.org\)](#)

## 9. Carbon Reduction Plans

- 9.17. The Authority reserves the right to ask The Contractor for data regarding their organisational greenhouse gas emissions during the life of the contract.
- 9.18. A Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) has been included in this procurement for information only.
- 9.19. A compliant CRP is one which meets all seven of the compliance criteria set out in the table below:

Ref	Compliance Criteria
1	Carbon Reduction Plan is published on company website (if the company does not have a website they must be willing to provide a copy of their CRP to anyone who requests it, within 30 days).
2	Plan contains scope 1 and scope 2 emissions data
3	Plan contains emissions data for the following scope 3 measures: upstream transport & distribution, waste generated in operations, business travel, employee commuting, downstream transport & distribution.
4	Plan is dated within 12 months of tender submission
5	Company has set a target to achieve net zero by 2050 at the latest
6	Company has provided their baseline emissions
7	Company has provided the current year emissions

## 10. Risk

- 10.1 The successful bidder will be required to manage the contractual risks as described in the risk table (Appendix 1) identified as the responsibility of the supplier.
- 10.2 The successful bidder will be responsible for developing a risk management plan to be shared with ECC on request.
- 10.3 The Risk Plan should outline the risk, the risk strategy, actions taken and a RAG rating for each individual risk.
- 10.4 The successful bidder is expected to escalate to ECC any risk that has a status change from amber to red within 2 working days.

## 11. Authority's policies

### 11.1 Council's Information Policy Requirements -

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/Information%20Policy%20Requirements%20for%20Contractors%20-%2005.03.24.pdf>.

### 11.2 Supplier Charter - <https://www.essex.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Supplier%20Sustainability%20Charter.pdf>

### 11.3 Environmental Statement -

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/our-environmental-statement>

### 11.5 Anti-Bribery Policy – ECC Website -

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/Anti%20bribery%20and%20corruption%20policy%202025%20-%20Essex%20County%20Council.pdf>

## 12. Insurance and warranties

- a. Employer's (Compulsory) liability insurance - £5 million.
- b. Public liability insurance - £5 million.
- c. Professional indemnity insurance - £2 million.

## 13. E-Procurement Requirements

### 13.1 Overview

Essex County Council has implemented a fully automated Purchase to Pay system. Purchase to Pay enables the full purchasing and payment process to be carried out on-line, from order creation and authorisation to receipting and invoice matching. It is easier, faster and more efficient than conventional purchasing processes.

13.1.1 The Successful Bidder will be registered onto Essex County Council's Finance system, which is known as 'MyOracle' and in turn will receive a registration email to activate their iSupplier portal account

13.1.2 The MyOracle iSupplier portal account will enable the Successful Bidder to:

- View Purchase Orders
- View the status of invoice payments
- Amend details including address, contact, bank account changes
- Create additional user accounts

13.1.3 The Successful Bidder will also be added to our system 'Marketplace' which is a Proactis solution. It is a web-based system used by Essex County Council to submit Purchase Orders electronically to suppliers.

## **13.2 E-mailed Purchase Orders**

13.2.1 As a minimum, Purchase Orders will be sent electronically via Marketplace to the Successful Bidder's preferred central e-mail address. To ensure continuity of service, the Successful Bidder will be responsible for ensuring that Purchase Orders are processed quickly and efficiently. It is therefore not advisable to provide individual e-mail addresses unless appropriate access is available to ensure that orders are still processed if the main contact is unavailable. There is no transaction charge for e-mail orders which are sent to a preferred central e-mail address via Marketplace.

13.2.2 Purchase orders must be sent electronically to the Successful Bidder's central e-mail address.

## **13.3 E-mailed Invoicing**

13.3.1 As a minimum, the Successful Bidder will be required to submit invoices and credit notes electronically to a dedicated mailbox (Essex County Council will confirm the email address to the Successful Bidder) using the E-mailed Invoicing method as described below.

13.3.2 The Successful Bidder must ensure that when submitting invoices to Essex County Council;

- each invoice/credit note is attached to the e-mail as an individual PDF file. Please note, multiple invoices can be attached to a single e-mail but only if each invoice is attached as a separate PDF file.
- only invoices and credit notes which are addressed to Essex County Council are emailed to the dedicated mailbox. Other attachments or documents such as statements, reminders or general queries will not be processed. This dedicated mailbox is for invoices only.
- all invoices/credit notes must reference a corresponding Purchase Order Number (with the prefix "ECC").
- all invoices/credit notes include the Billing Address: Essex County Council, PO Box 528, Telford, TF2 2JW.

13.3.3 On approval of the electronic invoice an automatic payment will be made via BACS, direct to the Successful Bidder's bank account, in line with Essex County Council's contracted payment terms

13.3.4 The Successful Bidder will be required to receive orders electronically and submit invoices and credits electronically via E-mailed Invoicing (as described within the e-Procurement Requirements) by the contract commencement date.

13.3.5 Essex County Council reserves the right to review and/or change the end-to-end Purchase to Pay (P2P) process where improvements are required during the term of the contract.

## **13.4 E-Procurement Terms of Trading**

- 13.4.1 Goods/Services should only be provided/carried out on receipt of an Official Purchase Order which has been issued via Marketplace by Essex County Council.
- 13.4.2 All invoices and credit notes must be submitted electronically by the Successful Bidder to Essex County Council and as a minimum, must be submitted using the Emailed Invoicing method detailed within the e-Procurement Requirements, from the contract commencement date.
- 13.4.3 The Successful Bidder assumes full responsibility for ensuring that programs or other data downloaded uploaded or in any way transmitted electronically to Essex County Council are free from viruses, or any other items of a destructive nature whatsoever. Essex County Council makes every effort to virus check information made available for download from Marketplace. Essex County Council cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system which may occur whilst using material derived from Marketplace. Essex County Council recommends that users recheck all downloaded material with their own virus check software.

## **14. Agreement term**

- 14.1 The Agreement term for this agreement will be 3 years.
- 14.2 With appropriate notice the Authority may terminate the Agreement on any of the following Authority Break Point Dates: after every 12 months on the anniversary of the commencement date.

## **15 Payment**

- 15.1 The Authority will pay any invoice issued by the Supplier within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice following the delivery of the Good(s) and/or service(s). On the thirtieth day the payment will leave the account of the Authority
- 15.2 The rates/prices stated on the invoice must be those specified under this Agreement.

## **16 Commercial Response**

- 16.1 The Tenderer is to complete the commercial response detailed within the E-sourcing portal
- 16.2 The total value for the full term of the contract cannot exceed the affordability envelope of £1.140m in total or £380,000 in contract year 1 (12 months), £380,000 in contract year 2 (12 months) and £380,000 in contract year 3 (12 months). Where any Commercial Response exceeds the affordability envelope, the Council will exclude the entirety of any such bid.

## Appendix 1

### Risk Table

The successful bidder will be required to manage the contractual risks as described in the risk table (**PL0117 Procurement Risks**) identified as the responsibility of the supplier.



The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

This information is issued by:  
Essex County Council

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