



## Chelmsford City Council Cabinet

**July 2024**

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### **North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) – Partnership Agreement**

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#### Report by:

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Connected Chelmsford

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#### Officer Contact:

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#### Purpose

To consider the adoption of the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) Partnership Agreement.

#### Options

1. Approve the adoption of the NEEB Partnership Agreement
2. Decline to approve the adoption of the NEEB Partnership Agreement

#### Preferred option and reasons

The preferred option is Option 1. The City Council has been a partner of the North Essex Economic Board since 2020 and the partnership has been successful in delivering a range of economic development initiatives alongside the other partner authorities, sharing resources, expertise and delivering positive outcomes. The Partnership Agreement sets out in writing the framework for collaboration between partner authorities, providing clarity of the expectations and responsibilities of each local authority partner.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet approves the adoption of the NEEB Partnership Agreement
  2. Cabinet authorises the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Connected Chelmsford, in their position as NEEB Board Member, to sign the Agreement on behalf of the Council.
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### 1. Background

- 1.1. In 2019 Tendring, Colchester, Braintree, Uttlesford and Essex County Councils agreed to develop an economic strategy that would set out the opportunities within the North Essex economic corridor. A North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) was established to oversee the development of the Strategy.
- 1.2. Chelmsford City Council and Maldon District Council were invited to join NEEB in May 2020. In 2023 Epping and Harlow District Councils also joined NEEB.
- 1.3. The Board comprises of Leader and/or Cabinet Member representatives from each authority. An officer Steering Group oversees activity. Chelmsford City Council is currently represented on the NEEB Board by the Deputy Leader of Chelmsford City Council. Officers from the Economic Development Team sit on the Steering Group.
- 1.4. As a partnership, the local authorities have combined funding resources since 2020 to deliver a co-ordinated programme of business and skills support across North Essex. This has included funding from UK Shared Prosperity Fund which has resulted in a programme of business support being commissioned for 2023/24 and 2024/25, delivered by the Let's do Business Group.
- 1.5. In 2022/23 NEEB commissioned Henham Strategy Ltd to develop a refreshed Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan for the NEEB region. This document was adopted by Chelmsford City Council's Cabinet in September 2023 and comprised a strategic narrative, a delivery plan and an economic baseline. Work is now underway to implement the delivery plan, with various working groups having been set up across the different priority areas identified.

- 1.6. Alongside this activity of work, a Partnership Agreement has now been developed to formalise the arrangements of the NEEB partnership, providing details of how the partnership is to work, and the expectations and responsibilities of each partner local authority.

## 2. NEEB Partnership Agreement

- 2.1. The NEEB partnership agreement sets out the framework for collaboration between member authorities. It describes the role of NEEB, the structure of the partnership, responsibilities of partner authorities, decision making processes, the financial and resource management of the partnership, the relationship with the North Essex Councils Group and procedures for new partners joining and existing partners leaving the partnership.
- 2.2. Through detailing the mechanical working of the NEEB partnership, the NEEB Partnership Agreement ensures the continued transparency and accountability in the Partnership's operations, while enabling the effective collaboration to deliver on shared economic priorities to continue.
- 2.3. The Partnership Agreement can be viewed in Appendix A.

## 3. Conclusion

- 3.1. The adoption of the NEEB Partnership Agreement by Chelmsford City Council, will enable the Council to demonstrate its continued commitment to the NEEB Partnership. By adopting the Agreement it will help to ensure that the partnership continues to operate effectively, with all partners clear of their roles and responsibilities within the partnership.

### List of appendices:

NEEB Partnership Agreement

### Background papers:

None

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## Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: The North Essex Economic Board is a partnership between a number of Essex local authorities and it is appropriate for partnerships of this nature to have a clear agreement in place as to how they plan to operate. The NEEB partnership has no statutory decision-making powers. These decisions are taken by the relevant local authority partners directly.

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: Adopting the Agreement will ensure greater transparency and accountability of the Partnership.

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

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**Consultees:**

NEEB Board

NEEB Steering Group

**Relevant Policies and Strategies:**

NEEB Economic Development Strategy and Delivery Plan

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Appendix 1 – NEEB Partnership Agreement



**North Essex  
Economic Board**  
Partnership Agreement

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 Established in 2019, the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) is a partnership of local authorities across North and Mid Essex, working together to drive economic prosperity across all parts of the urban, rural and coastal region.
- 1.2 The NEEB partnership is made up of Braintree, Epping, Harlow, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford district councils, Chelmsford and Colchester city councils and Essex County Council.
- 1.3 Since its inception, the NEEB partnership has continually demonstrated the value and effectiveness of working collectively for the benefit of the region and has delivered multi-million-pound business support and skills programmes, resulting in successful outcomes for thousands of businesses and residents.

## 2. Purpose of agreement

- 2.1 This document is an agreement between each of the individual local authority members that form the NEEB partnership.
- 2.2 Through this agreement, the roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes for the NEEB partnership are clearly defined and formalised.
- 2.3 The Agreement serves as a commitment from each of the NEEB partners to work together in the way(s) outlined within this document, ensuring clear governance structures, effective collaboration and the long-term sustainability and success of the partnership.

## 3. The role of the North Essex Economic Board

- 3.1 The NEEB partnership represents the economic ambitions of partner members to work together to drive economic prosperity across North and Mid Essex.
- 3.2 NEEB provides strategic oversight of North and Mid Essex's diverse, inclusive, and productive economic priorities, ensuring tangible actions are delivered to support residents' and businesses' goals and aspirations.
- 3.3 NEEB promotes the region's potential and presents the strong and strategic rationale for further central government and private sector investment, needed to deliver North and Mid Essex's longer-term ambitions.
- 3.4 Much has been delivered by NEEB to date, including an extensive business covid-recovery support programme in 2020, which supported businesses through providing fully funded business support from industry specialists and opportunities for businesses and individuals to develop and learn new skills to build success.

3.5 In 2023, the NEEB partnership commissioned and subsequently adopted a North Essex Economic Strategy and two-year delivery plan. The adopted strategy sets out the following vision for North Essex:

*"A proactive, productive and progressive North Essex that advances its economic potential through inward and outward-facing partnerships, with all residents, businesses and visitors benefitting from the region's economic prosperity".*

3.6 The following four strategic priorities have been identified as the focus for NEEB's work:

- Innovative businesses and skilled residents.
- A green and high growth economy.
- A dynamic and connected region.
- Prosperous and inclusive communities.

## 4. NEEB Structure

4.1 The NEEB partnership is made up of nine local government partners, which represents over half of the second-tier local authorities in Essex.

4.2 Within the NEEB partnership each local authority will work together as equal partners

4.3 A diagram of the NEEB structure is provided at Annex 1 and highlights the different elements of the partnership, which include the NEEB Board, the NEEB Officer Steering Group and the NEEB Programme Manager.

## 5. NEEB Board

5.1 The purpose of the Board is to provide the formal leadership for NEEB. The Board is responsible for setting strategic direction. It will provide oversight for all of NEEB's work and is a forum to make decisions together.

5.2 The NEEB Board is made up of one Leader or Cabinet Member councillor representative from each partner local authority. Each local authority partner is responsible for identifying a suitable representative to join the NEEB Board.

5.3 All elected members representing their local authority on the NEEB Board are required to operate in accordance with the member code of conduct of the local authority they are representing.

### Board Meetings



- 5.4 Board meetings will be held on a quarterly basis, providing an opportunity in which highlights of NEEB's work can be shared and decisions can be voted on as required.
- 5.5 Meetings will be held either in person or virtually and will be chaired by the Chair or Vice Chair.
- 5.6 A member who is unable to attend a meeting should submit their apologies in advance to the NEEB Programme Manager. Members are asked to send a substitution in their place, where possible.
- 5.7 An additional meeting of the NEEB Board may be convened at any time by the Chair as required.

### **Chairmanship**

- 5.8 The Board comprises both a Chair and a Vice Chair.
- 5.9 The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the NEEB Board is effective in its task of setting and implementing the partnership's direction and strategy. The Chair will act as NEEB's leading representative and will ensure that Board meetings are run effectively. The Chair will work with the NEEB Programme Manager to set the agenda for the meetings.
- 5.10 The Vice Chair supports the Chair in ensuring the NEEB Board functions effectively and will also take on responsibilities delegated by the Chair and will be the Chair's deputy in times of absence.
- 5.11 Board Members can nominate other Board Members or themselves for the role of Chair or Vice Chair. Nominations are required to be seconded by another Board Member. In the instance of more than one nomination being received for the position of either Chair or Vice Chair, the NEEB Board will take a vote.
- 5.12 The positions of Chair and Vice Chair are held for one year.

### **Agenda and Minutes**

- 5.13 The NEEB Programme Manager is responsible for drawing up the agenda for meetings with the approval of the Chair and ensuring that there is adequate supporting information.
- 5.14 Any Board Member wishing to request that an item is placed on the agenda for a meeting should communicate with the NEEB Programme Manager. The Chair has discretion over whether the item is included on the agenda.
- 5.15 The agenda (and relevant papers) for a meeting should be sent to each member, electronically, seven days in advance of the meeting.

5.16 Minutes of the meeting shall be taken by the NEEB Programme Manager and will include any decisions made by the Board.

5.17 Minutes will be approved by the Chair and then circulated promptly by the NEEB Programme Manager to all Board Members.

## **Decision Making**

5.18 The NEEB partnership has no statutory decision-making powers. These decisions are taken by the relevant local authority partners directly. However, local authorities may delegate responsibilities to their elected representative in relation to decisions concerning the work of NEEB and economic activities. It is the responsibility of each NEEB partner to satisfy themselves that their own local authority decision making processes and protocols are being followed and adhered to.

5.19 The Scheme of Delegation in Annex 2 sets out how and by whom decisions can be made.

5.20 Where decisions have been delegated to the Board, it is preferable for decisions taken by the NEEB Board to be by consensus. In instances where it has not been possible to establish unanimity, a matter may be decided by a simple majority vote of the Board Members.

5.21 The quorum for meetings of the Board is five Board Members. Where there is no quorum the meeting may proceed, but no decisions can be taken. Alternatively, the meeting can be re-arranged.

5.22 The Board may consider a resolution proposed in writing (including by email) other than at a meeting if the Chair considers the circumstances are such that this would be the best course of action. Any reports considered on this basis must receive sufficient repose to constitute the quorum for a NEEB Board meeting. Board Members will be given a minimum of one week to consider reports circulated by email.

5.23 Each NEEB partner is responsible for reporting back to their respective authorities, as necessary on the work of NEEB. A formal annual report on NEEB's achievements, priorities for the future and budget position will be produced annually by the NEEB Programme Manager for NEEB partners to share with their own local authorities as appropriate.

## **Attendance to Observe**

5.24 The following are able to attend meetings of the NEEB Board, to observe only and do not have authority to vote or approve any matter:

- Members of the NEEB Officer Steering Group.
- Such other persons as the Chair of the Board may from time to time determine.

## **6. NEEB Officer Steering Group**

- 6.1 The purpose of the Officer Steering Group is to oversee delivery of the NEEB strategy. The Steering Group are responsible for collectively working towards achieving NEEB's shared objectives and reviewing the performance of commissioned contracts.
- 6.2 Each local authority partner is responsible for identifying a suitable representative(s) to join the NEEB Steering Group, which would usually be a senior officer with responsibility of or overview of local economic development.
- 6.3 The Steering Group is responsible to the NEEB Board and will provide regular updates to the Board of its activities. The NEEB Steering Group has no formal delegated powers from the local authorities in the partnership.

### **Steering Group Meetings**

- 6.4 Steering Group meetings will be held monthly to discuss KPI's, and activities linked to achieving the partnership's shared objectives.
- 6.5 Meetings will be held either in person or virtually. The meetings will be chaired by the Corporate Director of Growth at Braintree District Council, as the current host authority for the NEEB Programme Manager.
- 6.6 The NEEB Programme Manager is responsible for setting the agenda for these meetings in liaison with the Chair for the Steering Group.
- 6.7 Officers who are unable to attend a meeting should submit their apologies in advance to the NEEB Programme Manager. Officers may wish to send a substitute in their place.

## **7. North Essex Economic Board Programme Manager**

- 7.1 The Programme Manager is employed on a fixed term contract. Braintree District Council acts as the current host authority for the NEEB Programme Manager.

7.2 The NEEB Programme Manager provides organisational support to both the NEEB Board and to the NEEB Officer Steering Group. This includes:

- Arranging all meetings.
- Distributing agendas and papers.
- Minute taking.
- Acting as secretariate to the NEEB Board.
- Contract management.
- Budget holder and responsibility.
- Stakeholder engagement.
- Procurement of programmes.

7.3 The NEEB Programme Manager leads on the contract management of NEEB's activities and is responsible for monitoring the performance of NEEB's activities and for budget monitoring.

7.4 Additionally, the NEEB Programme Manager may be required to carry out research to support the direction of NEEB's work.

7.5 The role of the NEEB Programme Manager is funded jointly by all NEEB partners.

## **8. Financial and Resource Management**

### **Financial**

8.1 The partners are committed to the fair and equitable resourcing of NEEB. Each partner has agreed to contribute financially to the partnership to establish and maintain a pooled fund to support the work of NEEB. The financial contribution agreed for each NEEB partner is set out in Annex 3.

8.2 Each partner will contribute its financial contribution to Braintree District Council, as the current host authority of the NEEB Programme Manager, as detailed with the funding agreement.

8.3 The current host authority will provide the financial administration accounting system and appropriate associated support for NEEB finances. This shall be performed in accordance with the host authority's Financial Regulations.

8.4 The NEEB Board shall receive regular updates on NEEB's financial position. An annual financial report shall be received by the NEEB Board and will include:

- NEEB's budget position
- Details of any underspend
- Any requests for future financial contributions from partners
- Budget plan for future financial year

## **Procurement**

- 8.5 Braintree District Council, as the current host authority for the NEEB Programme Manager, will act as the Procurement Agent for the NEEB partnership and as such will lead on the procurement of goods and services which support the activities of NEEB.
- 8.6 The Procurement Agent will ensure that it adheres to and satisfies its own local authority's procurements procedures.
- 8.7 NEEB partners agree to commit 4% of the overall NEEB financial contribution to Braintree District Council to cover the costs incurred of the host authority for procurement, legal, HR and governance etc.
- 8.8 Where appropriate, NEEB partners will have an opportunity to be involved in the procurement process, for instance commenting on tender documents or as a member of the evaluation panel.
- 8.9 Where the Procurement Agent enters into any contract or communications with any prospective supplier in relation to the work of NEEB, it shall make clear in any such contract or communications that it is doing so on behalf of all the local authorities that form the NEEB partnership.
- 8.10 The NEEB Programme Manager is responsible for the ongoing contract management of any contracts entered into on behalf of NEEB.

## **Communications**

- 8.11 Tendring District Council is the current lead authority for NEEB communications.
- 8.12 As Communications Lead, Tendring District Council will provide a lead officer to provide communication support and advice to NEEB, to develop and maintain a communications plan and to work with the NEEB Programme Manager to effectively oversee and manage the partnership's communications budget.
- 8.13 The partnership's communication budget will be set annually through the budget setting process. The Communications Lead, working alongside the NEEB Programme Manager, may make recommendations to the NEEB Board on how best to utilise the communications budget to ensure the effective promotion of NEEB and its activities.
- 8.14 Any communications support procured to support with NEEB marketing activities will be contract managed by the NEEB Programme Manager with support from the Communications Lead from Tendring District Council.

- 8.15 All NEEB partners are expected to support NEEB communications using their own local communication channels and platforms.

## **9. Relationship with the North Essex Councils Group**

- 9.1 The NEEB partnership complements the work of the North Essex Councils Group through providing clear direction and action to support the achievement of shared strategic objectives, specifically focused on realising economic prosperity of the North Essex area.
- 9.2 The NEEB partnership will work collaboratively with the North Essex Councils Group in the spirit of open and two-way communication providing details of priorities, workstreams and performance updates.
- 9.2 This relationship will be kept under review, particularly in relation to the work around LEP transition, combined authorities and activities relating to shared services.

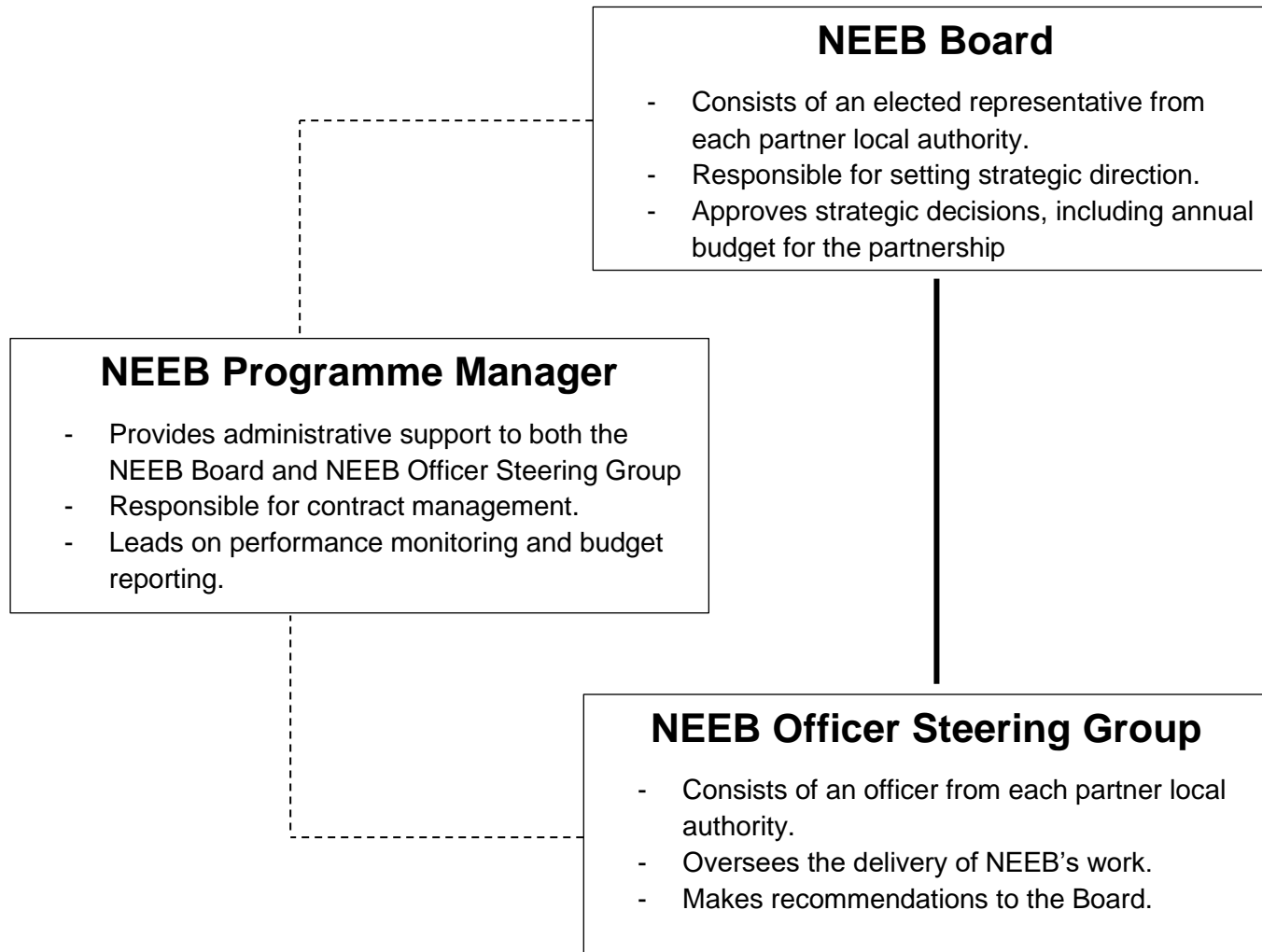
## **10. Additional Local Authority Partners**

- 10.1 If appropriate, to achieve the objectives of NEEB, the partners may agree to include additional local authority members to the partnership.
- 10.2 In such instances, potential members should send a written request stating their wish to join NEEB to the Chair. The Chair will then take the request to the Board to vote upon.

## **11. Partner Exit Arrangements**

- 11.1 Exiting the partnership can be initiated at any time, barring any contractual commitments.
- 11.2 A local authority partner who wishes to leave the NEEB partnership should set out their intention to leave in writing to the NEEB Programme Manager. At least three months' notice should be given. The optimal time for this to happen would be at the end of the financial year to allow for the partnership's plans and budgets to be synchronised with this change.
- 11.3 If a local authority leaves during the financial year, no refund on fees will be provided to cover costs already committed to resources and projects.

## Annex 1 – Diagram of NEEB Structure



## Annex 2 – Scheme of delegation

| Issue   | Delegated To   |
|---|--|
| <b>Strategy</b>   |  |
| Vision missions and values  | NEEB Board   |
| Development and approval of Economic Strategy and delivery plan   | NEEB Board (with approval of each local authority partner)   |
| Implementation of Economic Strategy and delivery plan   | NEEB Board (on recommendations from NEEB Officer Steering Group)   |
| Approval of NEEB Brand  | NEEB Board   |
| Changes to NEEB operating structure   | NEEB Board   |
| <b>Projects / Programmes</b>  |  |
| Awarding of funding for projects or programmes  | NEEB Board (following initial decisions on how spending is to be used from constituency authorities)                                   |
| In programme funding changes up to:<br><br>£1,000   | NEEB Programme Manager (on recommendations from NEEB Officer Steering Group)   |
| Over £1,000   | NEEB Board (on recommendations from NEEB Programme Manager and NEEB Officer Steering Group)  |
| Change requests from projects or programmes with no financial implications but changes to outputs or timeline | NEEB Programme Manager (on recommendations from NEEB Officer Steering Group)   |
| <b>Governance</b>   |  |
| Timely production of agendas, reports and minutes   | NEEB Programme Manager   |
| Appoint Chair and Vice Chair  | NEEB Board   |
| Appointments of new Local Authority Partners  | NEEB Board   |
| <b>Financial</b>  |  |
| NEEB partner annual financial contribution  | NEEB partner local authority (on recommendation of local authority representatives on both NEEB Board and NEEB Officer Steering Group) |
| Approval of financial budgets   | NEEB Board   |
| Day to day spend by NEEB Programme Manager  |  |
| Up to £499.00   | NEEB Programme Manager   |
| £499.00 - £9,999.00   | NEEB Officer Steering Group Chair  |
| £10,000.00 +  | NEEB Board   |
| <b>HR</b>   |  |
| Performance management of NEEB Programme Manager  | Host Authority BDC (with input from Board / Steering Group)  |
| Recruitment of Board Members  | NEEB Board   |





### Annex 3 – Financial Contributions from NEEB partners for 24/25

| Authority            | 2024/25 Contribution |                     | Total              |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                      | UKSPF                | NEEB Delivery Costs |                    |
| Braintree DC         | £52,000              | £20,000             | £72,000            |
| Chelmsford CC        | £60,000              | £20,000             | £80,000            |
| Colchester CC        | £65,000              | £20,000             | £85,000            |
| Epping Forest DC     | -                    | £20,000             | £20,000            |
| Harlow C             | -                    | £20,000             | £20,000            |
| Maldon DC            | £65,835              | £20,000             | £85,835            |
| Tendring DC          | £45,000              | £20,000             | £65,000            |
| Uttlesford DC        | -                    | £20,000             | £20,000            |
| Essex County Council | -                    | £20,000             | £20,000            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         | <b>£287,835.00</b>   | <b>£180,000.00</b>  | <b>£467,835.00</b> |