

ESSEX BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' views on the request for the Council to become a funding member of the Essex Biodiversity Partnership.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Partnership is currently funded as follows:
- Essex County Council
 - Essex Wildlife Trust
 - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
 - English Nature
 - Chelmsford, Harlow and Maldon District Councils
- 2.2 The DEFRA funding is time limited to three years and is due to expire at the end of this financial year. The future of the Partnership is in doubt if other funding members cannot be encouraged to join.
- 2.3 If Rochford did wish to become a funding member, a contribution of £2,000 per annum is suggested.

3 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Rochford is a partner in the Trust, but at present makes no financial contribution.
- 3.2 The Council's Woodlands Officer advises that the Trust has provided direct assistance to this Council, which has enabled the Authority to secure £6,000 from landfill taxes in support of biodiversity initiatives.
- 3.3 The Authority therefore benefits from the work of the Trust as it provides an additional resource. This will be lost if the Trust is unable to continue working after the end of this financial year.

4 BENEFITS FOR FUNDING MEMBERS

- 4.1 The main benefit to the Council would be the continuation of the work of the Trust to which access is given.
- 4.2 As a funding member, the Authority would be able to call on more officer time from the Trust which would benefit a number of key projects such as management works to preserve the water vole population at Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.
- 4.3 The Authority would have direct access to information gained from other projects carried out around the County. This would assist on issues such as Health Fritillary Butterfly and the Greater Crested Newt.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost to the Council would be £2,000 per annum if it chose to become a funding member. This sum may be vired from the maintenance of grounds budget as inflation on the major contract was estimated at 3%, but the appropriate index is likely to be around 2.5%.
- 5.2 The Council has already gained £6,000 as a result of assistance given by the Partnership. Expert assistance would be gained free of charge on issues regarding biodiversity.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that this Committee **RESOLVES**

That the Council become a funding Member of the Essex Biodiversity Partnership.

Roger Crofts

Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)

Background Papers:

None

For further information please contact Roger Crofts on:-

Tel:- 01702 318199
E-Mail:- roger.crofts@rochford.gov.uk