

DEVELOPMENT MONITORING SERVICES PROVIDED BY ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' views on a proposal from Essex County Council to provide a Development Monitoring Service for the District in the 3 years from April 2004 to March 2007.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 When the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill is enacted in 2004, the County Council will no longer have a statutory planning monitoring function, other than in relation to minerals and waste.
- 2.2 Discussions with all District Councils has confirmed that the Development Monitoring Service is valued, but that if the County Council was to maintain a service in the future, some sort of additional value would be required, particularly to justify a funding contribution from the District Councils.

3 THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The County Council has prepared a detailed Service Level Agreement (SLA) for development monitoring that focuses on more sophisticated data analysis through the use of Geographic Information Systems.
- 3.2 The intention would be to monitor a wide range of parameters within the broad headings of residential, business and employment, retail and recreation and leisure development. For example, for residential development, the monitoring scheme would include information on the:
- number of annual residential completions by private/public sector
 - net dwelling stock increase change by year and period
 - capacity of affordable housing units
 - capacity of windfall sites by sector
 - number of completions of previously developed land.
- 3.3 The draft SLA sets out a payment schedule for the monitoring service, based on each District's resident population from the 2001 Census. For Rochford, the charge for the service would be £4,200 in 2004/05 and a similar amount in the following two years, subject to an inflationary allowance.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The planning system now operates under the principles of an approach termed the 'plan, monitor and manage' approach. This means simply that a Planning Authority must plan for future development and then monitor progress. If progress towards, say, fulfilling housing allocations is not on target, then intervention will be required to manage delivery.
- 4.2 Therefore, a comprehensive regime of monitoring development progress is now a key part of the planning service delivered by all Local Planning Authorities. Members will recall that a framework for monitoring is described in Chapter 12 of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan.
- 4.3 In addition, Local Authorities are required to provide monitoring data on an annual programme to the East of England Regional Assembly.
- 4.4 To date, monitoring data has been prepared jointly by the County Council and District Councils with significant support from the County Council as part of the requirement for monitoring of the Structure Plan. However, the abolition of Structure Plans by the Planning Bill will mean that such monitoring will no longer be a requirement for the County Council and the burden for monitoring will fall wholly on the District Councils.
- 4.5 The proposal from the County Council would enable the monitoring service to continue with an enhanced level of service and more comprehensive reporting. In addition, some officer time would be freed up at District level, helping to build the capacity required to deal with the increased workload associated with the preparation of Local Development documents.
- 4.6 Overall, it is considered that, for a modest payment, there would be significant benefits for the District Council from the proposed arrangements.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of the proposed Development Monitoring Service to be provided by the County Council would be £4,200 in 2004/05 and the same, plus inflationary increases, in the following two years.
- 5.2 The cost of the service can be funded through payments from the Planning Delivery Grant.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 Strategic Risk

Monitoring is now an integral part of the delivery of a planning service and information reports must be produced on a regular basis, including data for Government monitoring and for the Regional Assembly.

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- 6.2 Therefore, there is a risk associated with the production of the required information and the Service Level Agreement proposed by the County Council would provide some comfort and capacity to ensure the system is maintained and developed and provides a timely response.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That Rochford District Council enters into a Service Level Agreement for the provision of a Development Monitoring Service as outlined in the report.

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Background Papers:

Letter and draft Service Level Agreement from Essex County Council dated 31st July 2003.

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