
FORMATION OF A GROUNDWORK TRUST FOR THE THAMES GATEWAY SOUTH ESSEX AREA

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' agreement in principle to the Council being involved in the creation of a Groundwork Trust.

2 GROUNDWORK TRUSTS

- 2.1 Groundwork is a national environmental regeneration charity sponsored by the Government, local authority and private partners. The purpose of the Trust is to build sustainable communities through joint environmental action.
- 2.2 With regard to the Thames Gateway, there are two key aims that fit closely with the objectives of a Groundwork Trust. These are:-
- Implementing sections of the Green Grid including raising funds and project development
 - Community-based projects, including capacity building and skills development.
- 2.3 A feasibility study has already been carried out indicating that a need for a Trust exists. The advantage of utilising a Groundwork Trust is that match funding of up to 50% may be available from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) towards the core costs of the Trust. Groundwork Trusts across the country have demonstrated an ability to lever in resources in the ratio of 20:1 for particular project work.
- 2.4 Work is now required to identify what projects could be included in a Trust and identify core funding in order to attract contributions from ODPM. Funding from ODPM could be for six years with a possibility of 12 years funding on a tapering basis.
- ### **3 ISSUES IN RESPECT OF THE BUSINESS PLAN**
- 3.1. Preliminary discussions have been held with the consultant engaged to promote the Groundwork Trust. In constructing the business plan, the following issues are identified:-
- The Trust would not necessarily have to constrain its activities purely within the TGSE area. Therefore, the whole of the District could benefit.

- In formulating the business plan, it would not be essential for each contributing authority to have projects in place in the first 1 to 2 years of Trust operation.
- Outputs may be practical, such as projects to resolve youth nuisance, creation of open spaces. Some authorities may be content with strategic outputs such as improving south east Essex through partnership working.
- The Trust would be an independent charity requiring accommodation and staffing. There would be governance issues with regard to the overall management of the charity.
- To run the charity for the first six years would require contributions from participating authorities. The proposals at present are:-

Authority	Annual Contribution
	£000
Basildon	50
Southend	50
Thurrock	50
Essex County	50
Castle Point	30
Rochford	30
Sub total	260
ODPM Match Funding	260
Total Budget available	520

- Contributions may be in kind such as accommodation or staffing secondments.
- In taking projects forward, match funding from ODPM would be available. Match funding from the Council in these cases could be funding from other sources, S106 agreements, etc.
- The timetable for the Trust to go live is currently 1 April 2005.
- The business case for the Trust would be produced by the consultant with information being provided by the constituent councils.
- With regard to accommodation, it could be ascertained if there were any rooms available in the local railway stations that the rail authorities would be prepared to contribute.
- Outcomes would be centred around youth issues, employment and capacity building, open spaces, etc.

- With regard to Rochford, the following possible projects have been discussed with the consultant:-
 - Identifying schemes through the Crime and Disorder partnership which would reduce youth problems in the area
 - Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park. This would be a prime project to attract funding and free labour through job training schemes, community involvement, etc. Care would need to be exercised to ensure that the resource offered by the Trust would benefit such a major project.
 - Town centres – we could look at projects to put forward
 - Park School site/Sweyne Park – if the community development contained funding from the PCT, this would be regarded as match funding which could be used to further the development of the green areas. A “green gym” and a biodiversity area was suggested.

4 THE WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 At this point in time, no commitment is required from the Council other than officer time in assisting the consultant to formulate the proposal.
- 4.2 The Council would only be required to make a commitment after the formulation of the business plan. At this stage the Council will be in a position to make an informed judgement as to the merits of proceeding with the proposal.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 At this stage of the exercise, the only resource implication is the investment of officer time.
- 5.2 Should the Council eventually agree to become involved in the Trust, there would be an annual cost, estimated at present at £30,000 per annum for six years. In addition there would be cost implications in respect of projects identified by the Council.
- 5.3 It may well be possible to reduce the above costs by making contributions in kind, eg, officer time, accommodation, etc. This could be particularly so in respect of projects considering the current officer expertise and budget availability for project areas such as Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park.
- 5.4 If the Groundwork Trust were able to lever in resources in similar proportions to other parts of the country, the benefits to Rochford could outweigh any costs involved.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no risk implications at this point time. Risk implications will be assessed at the time decisions are made with regard to committing to a Trust.

7 RECOMMENDATION

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

- (1) To support in principle the creation of a Groundwork Trust for the Thames Gateway South Essex Area.
- (2) To agree to officers continuing involvement in the formulation of the Business Plan and the setting up of the Trust.

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Background Papers:

None

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