
THAMES GATEWAY – SOUTH ESSEX PARTNERSHIP - PROGRESS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates Members on developments within the Partnership and seeks endorsement to the Council submitting a range of projects for potential funding.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Thames Gateway – South Essex forms part of the overall Thames Gateway initiative, which covers part of Kent and much of East London bordering the Thames. It is a national initiative and represents the largest regeneration project in Europe. Only a small part of Rochford lies within the Gateway; that is London Southend Airport and the adjoining employment area, but nonetheless the District enjoys full representation at Board level with the Leader of the Council, Cllr. PFA Webster, being the Council's board representative.
- 2.2 Following on from the Deputy Prime Minister's announcement earlier this year on the Communities Plan, progress is now well underway in establishing special delivery vehicles for each of the zones of change within Thames Gateway – South Essex. Thurrock will have its own Development Corporation, which is likely to mirror the Authority's boundaries. Southend's delivery vehicle is likely to focus on the town centre and seafront, whilst Basildon's is likely to focus on the town centre and Gardiners Lane. The intention is that once these vehicles are in place, Government funding will go directly to the projects in these areas via the delivery vehicles rather than via the South Essex Partnership Board.
- 2.3 Hence, the role of the Partnership Board is likely to revert to a more strategic level in coming months. A review is currently underway as to precisely what the role of the Partnership under the new arrangements should be and how it should be achieved, with the conclusions available by the end of July.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 There is some concern that with the creation of the three specific delivery vehicles focussing on Thurrock, Southend and Basildon, Castle Point and Rochford may lose out on potential funding opportunities and also on access to the skills necessary to bring forward "difficult" and "problem" sites within their respective areas.

- 3.2 To address this matter, discussions are therefore underway with Castle Point, Essex County Council and the Thames Gateway Partnership office in an attempt to provide a mechanism for Castle Point and Rochford through which specific funding and access to specialist skills can be secured. It is recognised that in both areas the development opportunities are not of a sufficient scale to require the establishment of a formal new delivery vehicle. However, they do require specialist support, intervention and access to funding to enable such opportunities to be brought forward quickly and realised. At this point in time the favoured mechanism is to establish a Steering Group of appropriate Partners, administered by the Partnership Office. This Group would identify projects to be undertaken, determine the means of delivery and monitor progress. The Partners would include:

- Castle Point and Rochford District Councils
- Essex County Council
- East of England Development Agency
- English Partnerships

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Government's Regional Office (GoEast) and the Housing Corporation would be invited to participate as appropriate.

- 3.3 In parallel with these discussions, the Council has also been asked for potential bids around the themes of Environment, Transport, Economic Development/Innovation, Skills/Employment generation, Community Regeneration, and "Sense of Place", against the initial three year tranche of funding allocated by ODPM for Thames Gateway initiatives in general.
- 3.4 In making any such bid submissions, it needs to be recognised that only a small part of the District rests within the Gateway as such. Nonetheless, the opportunity has been taken to propose a range of projects which will emphasise Rochford's role within the Gateway in relation to leisure, recreation and tourism. Some creativity has been shown in terms of the specific Thames Gateway – South Essex boundary itself, but the projects suggested very much contribute to the Thames Gateway "themes" and are in accordance with the policies and initiatives listed in the Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan and/or in the emerging the Local Plan.

- 3.5 Those projects put forward to the Gateway Office for further consideration include the following:
1. Funding to support the infrastructure requirements of the Cherry Orchard Business Park
 2. Funding to support the extension and further development of the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park
 3. Funding to support a study of the feasibility and potential of the Southend Airport site to become a regional airport facility and further examination of the options in the light of that study.
 4. Development and enhancement of further sites around the airport perimeter.
 5. Funding for site acquisition/development of the Rochford supermarket site.
 6. Funding to establish a heritage/enhancement fund for Rochford Town Centre and its environs.
 7. Funding for site acquisition, clearance and development at Stambridge Mills
 8. Funding to establish a District-wide Enhancement fund for employment areas
 9. Funding to develop and enhance the heritage potential and provide a learning and resource centre at Rayleigh Windmill.
 10. Funding to facilitate the development of a Healthy Living Centre within the planned new leisure complex at the Former Park School Site.
- 3.6 The bid costs suggested against each of these projects is included in an exempt appendix to this report for Members' information.
- 3.7 Members are asked to endorse the bid submissions being compiled.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 If funding is forthcoming, many of the projects will have a positive impact on the environment of Rochford District.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 At this stage, all the resource inputs required are in terms of officer and member time in preparing the bid submissions and pressing for them within the partnership arena.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) to note the progress being made in terms of developing a mechanism through which Castle point and Rochford projects can be advanced.
 - (2) to endorse the range of bids to be submitted to the Partnership Office which reflect priorities within the Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan and the emerging Local Plan.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

Background Papers:

None

For further information please contact Paul Warren on:-

Tel:- 01702 318199
E-Mail:- paul.warren@rochford.gov.uk