

THAMES GATEWAY – SOUTH ESSEX

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report updates Members on progress and seeks Members' views on the way forward, particularly with regard to funding.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Government is now progressing with the extension of the Thames Gateway into South Essex. At Government level, mechanisms are being put into place to ensure effective operation from Spring 2001.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The delivery of the Government's proposals for the Thames Gateway has already led to the establishment of partnerships between the relevant Authorities and organisations in North Kent and also in London.
- 3.2 Councillor Fox, as Council Spokesperson, has now met with the Leaders/Spokespersons of other Authorities within the Thames Gateway – South Essex designation – Thurrock, Basildon, Castle Point, Southend – on two occasions to discuss how the affected Local Councils can best work together in partnership to move the initiative forward in South Essex. However, progress has been slow.
- 3.3 A key issue that remains to be resolved is the resource implications/contributions that are likely to be required from each Authority.
- 3.4 Experience from elsewhere suggests that around £300,000 - £350,000 in total per annum will be required to provide organisational support to the South Essex Thames Gateway initiative. However, that level of support does include accommodation and IT costs. The key contributors will undoubtedly be the larger Authorities within the partnership – the East of England Development Agency, Essex County Council, Thurrock and Southend Borough Councils.
- 3.5 It was hoped that the position regarding the contributions from these Authorities would be sufficiently advanced to enable a figure to have been included in this Council's budget process for consideration by Members. Unfortunately, that has not proved to be the case. In discussions that have taken place to date, the contribution sought from

this Council towards the total figure has been suggested at between £100 and £8,000, depending upon the criteria employed. It is clear that if the Council wants to be involved in the process, some level of contribution will be required. Despite the lack of progress between the Authorities to date in determining a level of contribution from each Authority, the Chief Executive is minded to suggest a figure of up to £5,000 at this stage if the Council wishes to remain involved.

- 3.6 Clearly the Council will need to determine the nature of its involvement and the appropriate level of commitment that it wishes to give to the initiative. Whilst only a small part of the District actually lies within the Gateway, the investment potential that such designation brings to the South Essex corridor will have implications for the District, in terms of employment opportunities and infrastructure improvements in particular. It is therefore felt that there is merit in playing as full a role as possible in any partnership, to ensure that the Rochford viewpoint is heard. At the same time it is recognised that the resources and budget available to the Council will place its limitations on the level of support that can be given and hence the suggestion of a contribution of up to £5,000.

4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Nothing specific at this stage.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The development brought about through the Thames Gateway initiative may have considerable environmental implications.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is nothing currently included within the budget to support the Thames Gateway initiative. However, if Members are agreeable to the suggestion of up to £5,000, this can be fed into the budget process at the half yearly review stage.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Nothing specific

8 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Nothing specific

9 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that this Sub Committee considers its views on the level of support and commitment that should be given to the Thames Gateway South Essex Initiative. (CEX)

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Background Papers:

DETR Regional Planning Guidance Document
DETR News Release 664 Thames Gateway

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