

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

4

Report of Corporate Director for
Place

to
Cabinet

on
9th December 2014

Report prepared by: Scott Dolling, Head of Economy,
Regeneration and Tourism

Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (TGSEP) Update

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s)
Executive Councillor: Councillor Graham Longley
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To appraise Cabinet of recent developments in Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (TGSEP) and seek approval for further and additional negotiations to secure revised arrangements.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the changing environment of the partnership.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agree to the development of a new partnership with Thurrock Council and other appropriate partners to replace TGSEP's current arrangements from 1st April 2015.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Thames Gateway is a key driver for regeneration and economic growth and is one of the four agreed federated areas of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). The four areas were agreed within the strategic economic plan (SEP) submitted to Government and ratified by the December 2013 SELEP board which includes Essex County Council (ECC).
- 3.2 To acknowledge the important status of the Thames Gateway, a Minister is assigned to the overall area of which South Essex forms a significant part. Successful funding bids across the area have benefited many partners and Southend-on-Sea has been the recipient of multi million pound packages that have helped deliver transformational projects across the Borough.
- 3.3 Future funding from Government is now intrinsically linked to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (TGSEP) has negotiated hard to ensure that South Essex remains as a

represented geographical area within the LEP's strategic economic plan (SEP). In addition to ourselves, the current partnership includes Thurrock, Castle Point, Rochford and Basildon Councils, with three of these authorities being tier two. ECC has also been a consistent partner to date and included in all related activities. Businesses from these areas form the decision making process alongside the local authority partners which demonstrates to funding agencies that our bids are conducive to the business community and focused on economic growth.

- 3.4 ECC have given notice that it is withdrawing from the partnership preferring to operate the LEP through three federated areas rather than the four that had previously been agreed by them. This argument has not been supported by the LEP Board, nor the strategic plan already with Government and weakens the profile of South Essex projects which would have to compete with other considerations in the rest of Essex.
- 3.5 The tier two local authorities of South Essex have been given some time to decide their own response by ECC. We await their decision, but continue regular dialogue with them in the spirit of partnership and would be happy to include any interest in maintaining the current links.
- 3.6 Officers recommend that we continue to pursue our regeneration goals and funding bids as part of a reconstituted and possibly wider TGSEP without the support of ECC but anchored by ourselves, Thurrock Council and any other potential participants. New arrangements would be established for a similarly structured partnership agreement to begin from 1st April 2015.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 ECC would prefer three federated areas rather than the currently agreed four. The alternative option would be to accede to this view and work across one 'Greater Essex' region. South Essex partners would then need to negotiate within an overall Essex funding envelope against other priorities in the county. This option is not recommended as would diminish the profile of strategic schemes in Southend-on-Sea and potentially lead to delays on delivery of future projects.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The retention of a partnership in the Thames Gateway South Essex area ensures a higher profile for Southend-on-Sea projects on the national agenda and minimises risk of being subsumed in county-wide prioritisation process.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

- 6.1.1 A separate south Essex strand ensures that our regeneration objectives, which underpin significant wider projects, remain in focus.

6.2 Financial Implications

6.2.1 Funding bids to government via Growth Deals are through the LEPs and all major political parties appear signed up to continuing the role of LEPs in the future. Our bids will stand better chance of success if decided in a South Essex rather than 'Greater Essex' context. The round two funding envelopes will range from £25M - £150M for the LEP with notional allocations for South Essex £4.25M - £25M respectively, however future and larger opportunities will be potentially compromised without the south Essex focus.

6.3 Legal Implications

6.3.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

6.4 People Implications

6.4.1 There are no people implications as a result of this report.

6.5 Property Implications

6.5.1 There are no property implications as a result of this report.

6.6 Consultation

6.6.1 The withdrawal of Essex County Council was made without any consultation with Southend Borough Council, Thurrock Council, or the business community. We have subsequently consulted our business representatives and the Chamber of Commerce who believe the Essex County Council decision to be a retrograde step.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.7.1 There are no equalities and diversity implications as a result of this report.

6.8 Risk Assessment

6.8.1 Without a separate federated area for South Essex, funding would be potentially lost to other priorities across the Greater Essex area. The development of a new partnership to retain the four federated areas mitigates the risk.

6.9 Value for Money

6.9.1 There is no direct implication but future funding bids could be compromised without a south Essex focus and its own chapter in the funding rounds.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

6.10.1 There are no community safety implications as a result of this report.

6.11 Environmental Impact

6.11.1 There are environmental impacts as a result of this report.

7. Background Papers

7.1 Letter from Essex County Council dated 29th October 2014.

8. Appendices

8.1 None.