

DATE: 22nd February 2024	ITEM: 7
SEC Joint Committee (Informal Meeting)	
Report Title: Update on the ASELA Good Homes Workstream	
Report of: Jonathan Stephenson, Chief Executive, Brentwood and Rochford Council	
Accountable Programme SRO: Jonathan Stephenson, Chief Executive, Brentwood and Rochford Council	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

The Good Homes programme was established to both deliver ASELA's aspirations for new homes and the joint working required to deliver the Strategic Place Partnership (SPP) with Homes England.

There has been significant momentum in developing the Programme over recent months (supported by a refocused Business Plan and fit for purpose governance, as outlined in the 28th September update report to Joint Committee). However, the programme funding from Homes England finished at the end of last year.

This paper provides, following discussions at the Joint CEO meeting, an overview of the Good Homes Programme progress, recent discussions with Homes England around future partnership opportunities and a proposal for funding from SEC for interim programme support the next 6 months to maintain programme momentum.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 SEC Members are asked to;
- Note the progress of the Good Homes Programme and current position;
 - Note the discussions with Homes England around future partnership opportunities;
 - Approve a funding request of £54,000 over the next 6 months to provide ongoing programme support.

2. Good Homes Programme Progress

- 2.1 SEC has been actively collaborating with Homes England since 2019, and in recognition of South Essex's ambition, potential and the scale of the delivery

challenges faced, formed a Strategic Place Partnership (SPP) with Homes England to unlock and accelerate housing delivery across the area which will enable our growth ambitions.

- 2.2 While progress has been achieved, there have been significant challenges in putting in place the right focus, shared purpose, fit for purpose & bespoke funding commitments and effective governance around the partnership to make the step change and pace originally envisaged.
- 2.3 However last year, through close working with the SEC and Homes England, we have reviewed the approach and helped shape the next phase of the Good Homes programme – captured it a refreshed Business Plan.
- 2.4 This includes the establishment of a new officer Programme Board to act as a ‘Centre of Excellence’ for housing delivery across SEC to ensure housing delivery keeps pace and supports wider economic growth. All board members are responsible for the development of a number of programme workstreams.
- 2.5 Programme delivery is refocused on a pipeline of deliverable priority sites (which could deliver 2,400 homes in the next few years) and a targeted number of catalyst sites - which are strategic sites that could unlock significant growth but which require a infrastructure led approach, greater certainty of funding and coordination. An action plan for the 7 catalyst sites identified has been developed to demonstrate their potential impact on the region and begin to define a route for Homes England’s involvement. High level work suggests that on their own, these catalyst sites could deliver 20,000+ homes of all tenures, as well as significant social-economic benefit (including £1.1bn in local additionality, £36m in additional council tax and 35,000 construction jobs).
- 2.6 We have also been careful to maintain relationships with our Registered Providers and development partners – who remain keen to work with us on the next steps. We have also kicked off the Six Streets Pilot with all SEC council, which through working on a ‘street/place’ in each borough, will create scalable models for partnership and leveraging institutional investment to unlock good quality homes and thriving places. There is also work underway around ensuring policy alignment around housing need, infrastructure delivery, innovation, sharing knowledge/best practice and shared services.
- 2.7 There is real momentum and support to continue to deliver this programme and realise the long-term benefits. However, the Homes England funding for programme support ended in December. While the Business Plan set out a more focused programme and a framework for it to be facilitated through existing resources where possible, there remains a significant risk that the progress made will be stalled without wider programme support. Stalling of the programme will also risk make it harder to capture future support from Homes England in the future.

3. Homes England Engagement

- 3.1 The SRO and Homes England Director for the South have recently met to discuss the future of the partnership and how SEC can support them in delivering their objectives and renewed focus on place making and creating thriving places through working ever more closely with local leaders, local residents and other partners to build communities as well as housing.
- 3.2 Home England remain committed to South Essex and to finding a way of reigniting and strengthening the partnership going forward – with the aim to fully realise the original shared vision to transform housing and regeneration in the region through a programme of strategic and tactical interventions to significantly increase housing delivery rates and embed outstanding place making principles in every project.
- 3.3 A proposed key next stage to putting the partnership back on track is for SEC to political reconfirm their collective commitment to working with Homes England and supporting growth and housing delivery.
- 3.4 As such, a letter to the Chair and CEO of Homes England from the Joint Committee has been sent that reconfirms SEC commitment to the partnership and its objectives. SEC officers putting in place the framework to work with Homes England to further define the future form of our partnership, joint progress of the Business Plan going forward and secure further programme funding support.

4. Ongoing Programme Support

- 4.1 While Homes England remain committed to working with SEC, they have indicated that there will not be further revenue funding in the short term.
- 4.2 To ensure the momentum and progress behind the Good Homes Programme is maintained and to ensure we are in the best position to respond to future partnership opportunities with Homes England and the 'Next Chapter' work, it is proposed that SEC provide interim programme funding over the next 6 months (with a budget of £9k per month).
- 4.3 This would enable us to maintain:
 - **Strategic Support** – continue to support work to elevate the partnership with Homes England to leverage better outcomes, feed into the 'Next Chapter' work and ensure the programme aligns with the wider SEC governance structures.
 - **Programme Governance** – continue to maintain, service and develop the Programme Board and Working Group over the period and ensure appropriate reporting.
 - **Workstream Development** – support the identified workstream leads in developing and embedding their activities over the period. This would include

a focus on the Catalyst sites and definition of their requirements to facilitate engagement with Homes England.

- **Partner Engagement** – maintain the relationship with key delivery partners, specifically the RP's and developer forum.

5. Next Steps

- Reset and elevate the strategic relationship with Homes England, putting in the framework to define future priorities, programme support and delivery framework.
- Continue to implement and deliver the Good Homes Programme Business Plan – building on recent momentum.

6. Reasons for Recommendation

- 6.1 Developing a renewed partnership with Homes England will be a key opportunity for future delivery of growth across South Essex.
- 6.2 Maintaining delivery of the Good Homes Programme, with its focus on a number of key deliverable and priority workstreams, overseen by a fit for purpose governance, offers a strong route forward to maintain momentum and ensure we are able to capture future opportunities.
- 6.3 ASELA Joint Committee are therefore asked to.
- Note the progress of the Good Homes Programme and current position.
 - Note the discussions and approach with Homes England around developing future partnership opportunities;
 - Approve a funding request of £54,000 over the next 6 months to provide ongoing programme support.

7. Consultation (if applicable) - N/A

8. Impact on policies, priorities, performance and community impact (if applicable) - N/A

9. Implications

- 9.1. **Financial** – The financial implications are set out in the report.
- 9.2. **Legal** – Legal implications of any projects will be set out in the project plans, and funding agreements will need the legal approval of the relevant accountable body.
- 9.3. **Other implications (where significant) – N/A**

10. Appendices to the report

- None