



**REPORT of
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

to
**PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE
15 JANUARY 2015**

STRATEGIC HOUSING AND ECONOMIC GROWTH PARTNERSHIP

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on recent discussions between a north-east Essex' grouping of authorities to collaboratively work together on Local Plans, housing growth and the planning to deliver the necessary infrastructure to support this.

2. AREA FOR DECISION / ACTION

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Many of the Districts and Boroughs across Essex are faced with the need to accommodate significant housing growth over the medium term. This brings with it the challenge of securing the investment to fund the required infrastructure to support the development and the need to create an environment for economic growth. This is a common challenge and the benefits of jointly working on this agenda are recognised.
- 2.1.2 Braintree District Council has taken the lead in pulling together a group of authorities – Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Maldon, Tendring and Essex to consider longer-term planning and 'place shaping' and thinking about what north-east Essex could look like in the next 10 to 30 years. Officer and Members representatives from the each of the authorities have met a number of times to help develop an improved understanding on each Authority's current local plan and housing growth situations and to consider the potential benefits of collaborative working on this shared agenda.
- 2.1.3 By way of an example the group looked at the work of Cambridgeshire authorities in developing a shared vision for growth across their region. This drew out the benefits of collaborative working, consideration of quality standards in development, the application of garden city principles and the delivery mechanisms including the resources required from partners to make this happen.
- 2.1.4 The most recent meeting took place on 4 December 2014 and there was a general consensus from Leaders or Deputy Leaders to develop this grouping from an informal forum into something more concrete, which builds on collaborative working and helps us develop a shared ambition and vision for this north-east area of the county. Graham Butland, the Leader of Braintree District Council has recently written to the Council setting out the general conclusions from the event.

- 2.1.5 The letter sets out that the next steps would be for Braintree’s Chief Executive to continue to co-ordinate a senior officer group, to include all authorities represented at the meeting, to work on a proposal and options paper which will aim to address the following questions and issues:
- (i) What are the terms of reference of this group? What is the narrative around this?
 - (ii) What would a Memorandum of Co-operation look like for this group? What are the common priorities and key issues?
 - (iii) How would it fit with the current LEP structure and four quadrants?
 - (iv) How does this fit with existing plans? e.g. Economic Plan for Essex,
 - (v) How does the planning compact support this?
 - (vi) What external resource do we need and how would this be funded?
 - (vii) What is the programme and timetable we are now working to?
 - (viii) Communications strategy
- 2.1.6 To take this forward, a senior officer meeting has been arranged on 20 January 2015. This will be followed by a further Leaders / Cabinet Member meeting to discuss the options and propose next steps. This is likely to take place in March 2015.

3. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 3.1 Long term strategic planning has an impact on all of the Council’s Goals.

4. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Planning and place shaping will in the long term bring significant benefits to our customers. It will assist in securing the delivery of necessary infrastructure and will provide an opportunity to create high-quality places offering people a better quality of life.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None identified.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Collaborative working on planning across a number of authorities will enable the Council to satisfy the requirements of the “Duty to Cooperate” and lessen the risk of challenges on future development plans.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Working collaboratively will enable authorities to share costs and resources and therefore reduce the burden on the public purse.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services will be required to commit his time to supporting the partnership.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – Long term planning will help to ensure that we protect our environment for future generations.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 A number of Essex Authorities have concluded that there are definite benefits to be had from collaborative working to plan and deliver growth across a wider region than the existing four Essex quadrants. It is proposed that a formal partnership be formed to help develop a shared ambition and vision for this north-east area of the county.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to endorse Maldon's membership of a formal wider partnership as set out in the report.

Background Papers: None.

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