

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
Date:	26 January 2016
Title:	Rural Delivery Strategy: Approvals for funding
Reference:	7153
Report From:	Director for Culture, Communities and Business Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to outline proposals for Rural Delivery Strategy funding for 2015/16. The proposals have been developed in accordance with the revised Rural Delivery Strategy priorities approved by Cabinet in March 2014.
- 1.2. This paper outlines three proposals for consideration, including one access to services initiative, one application to the Flood Alleviation Grant and one application to the Community Challenge Fund.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. The revised County Council Rural Delivery Strategy priority actions were agreed by Cabinet in March 2014 (report 5684). These include supporting community resilience, challenging rural isolation and loneliness, rural transport, self-help, communications, and economic development. They were reviewed in December 2014 and it was proposed to maintain these priorities.
- 2.2. The Community Challenge Fund and Flood Alleviation Grant were established to support community led projects that help deliver against the Rural Delivery Strategy priority actions. The re-launch of the Community Challenge Fund was approved by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources at his Decision Day in July 2014 (report 5940) and the establishment of the Flood Alleviation Grant approved in July 2015 (report 6626).
- 2.3. The funding proposals outlined in this report all fit within the priority actions and build on existing initiatives to maximise impact and use of available resources. All proposals have been reviewed by Departmental colleagues and the Lead Member for Rural Affairs, Councillor Rob Humby, who is supportive of the recommendations.

3. Finance

- 3.1. The Rural Delivery Strategy budget for 2015/16 is £275,000 (this includes a balance of £75,000 carried forward from 2014/15). £220,795 of this budget has been allocated, approved by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources at his Decision Day in July 2015 (report 6626). This included a 2015/16 funding allocation to the Flood Alleviation Grant and Community Challenge Fund, as outlined in paragraph 3.2 and 3.3 respectively.
- 3.2. The Flood Alleviation Grant budget for 2015/16 is £65,000. To date £29,000 has been awarded to projects, approved in July 2015 (report 6626). One new application has been received for consideration, for funding totalling £6,500.
- 3.3. The Community Challenge Fund budget for 2015/16 is £50,000. To date £10,600 has been awarded, this includes grants approved in July (report 6626), as well as three applications subsequently approved by officers for funding totalling £1,700 (paragraph 4.4). One new application has been received for consideration, for funding totalling £8,000. Section 5 of this report also refers to spend against the Community Challenge Fund budget.
- 3.4. One additional project proposal has been received for consideration, to be allocated from the Rural Delivery Strategy budget. This project is for funding totalling £10,000.

4. Funding proposals

- 4.1. *Grayshott access to services initiative, £10,000*: funding is sought for improvements to the access arrangement for the Grayshott Surgery at Boundary Road in Grayshott. This local surgery provides primary care facilities for the rural area and communities surrounding Grayshott, and is served by an un-adopted road and bridleway which is in a very poor state of repair. The state of the road is such that it is having an impact on access to the surgery, particularly for those residents who depend on vehicular access. Engineering advice has been provided to the Parish Council and the local Residents Group by the County Council to help formulate local proposals for remedial works to the tarmacked section at the northern end of Boundary Road which provides access to the surgery. East Hampshire District Council is expected to provide a significant funding contribution; contributions are also being sought from key stakeholders and the local community. It is proposed that the County Council should provide a modest contribution to support the work, in the rather exceptional circumstances of this case. Whilst the road also serves a number of private residences, beyond the surgery access, the improvement work will be limited to the portion directly serving the surgery.
- 4.2. **Flood Alleviation Grant**: these grants are to support small scale community-led rural flood alleviation schemes, which can include funding for feasibility work to carry out initial investigations. Projects must: show a demonstrable benefit to people and property, without any increase in risk elsewhere; have support from the local community and Parish/Town Council; have the necessary consents from the Environment Agency and Hampshire County Council. Some partnership funding should be in place, and projects must

represent good value for money. Funding approval is sought for one application to this scheme.

- a) *Romsey Riverwalk Restoration Project, £6,500 (grant reference 10255):* The River Walk is a popular route, forming part of the Test Way and Romsey Heritage Trail. The area has suffered long term erosion and recent flood damage and the riverbank is consequently supported by sandbags, plastic sheeting and scaffold planks/poles. Extensive site investigations and consents are required before any improvement work can begin. Funding is sought towards these initial investigations which will include a riverbank analysis and engineering survey, from which detailed designs can be formalised and presented to the Environment Agency. It is expected that one of the benefits coming out of any works approved will be to reinforce the riverbank and other supporting structures to help protect against future flood damage. The project has strong support from the local community. Over 100 questionnaires have been collected and a public consultation event held at the Town Hall resulted in many positive comments on the concept designs.

Officers are supportive of the project and its potential to enhance the partnership work that Hampshire County Council, Test Valley Borough Council and the Environment Agency are progressing on the wider Romsey Flood Alleviation Scheme. Countryside Service Officers are also supportive of the project as it will lead to improvements to the public right of way, which also forms part of the Test Way, one of the County's promoted long distance routes.

Funding totalling £2,500 has already been awarded to support this project via County Councillor grants.

- 4.3. **Community Challenge Fund:** these are small grants to support groups and organisations in rural Hampshire and small market towns. Projects must deliver measurable results against one or more of the scheme priorities: community resilience, rural transport, self help, communications and economic development. Funding approval is sought for one application to this scheme.

- a) *New Milton Town Partnership, £8,000 (grant reference 10265):* This independent charity was set up over nine years ago, to deliver the Town's Action Plan in conjunction with other local bodies including New Milton Town Council. A grant has been requested towards its Thriving Villages programme, which supports the transfer of business knowledge to rural communities around New Milton, to help develop community and economic resilience.

Funding totalling £10,000 was awarded to the New Milton Town Partnership in 2014/15 (report 5940), to support the establishment of this programme, which has already delivered benefits both directly and indirectly to several village communities. The funding requested this year would help to pay for the development and extension of a number of initiatives, including: a digital inclusion project; a project to encourage village businesses to become dementia friendly; local food, drink and

wedding guides as supplements to the Town Guide; projects to promote the culture, identity and sense of place of the villages.

Officers would support additional County Council funding being awarded to the programme and see great potential for the benefits to be rolled out to more villages, local producers and small businesses. There has also been increased support from the New Forest District Council and New Milton Town Council as well as the villages themselves, so the outcomes of the project are considered to be good value for money.

4.4. Grants approved by officers: It was agreed in Decision Report 5684 that grants of less than £1,000 would be approved by officers, using delegated powers, following discussion with the Lead Member. Grants approved in this way are then reported to the Executive Member for Policy and Resources retrospectively. The following grants have been approved since July 2015:

- a) *Film on a Farm, £950 (grant reference 9459):* funding to support the diversification of services in rural areas, in particular working with farms to provide a series of outdoor cinema events for the benefit of the rural community.
- b) *Hyde Parish Council, £250 (grant reference 9066):* funding to purchase equipment to support a Parish initiative for volunteers to take part in work days to complete litter picking, ragwort removal and path clearance.
- c) *Abbotts Ann Green Action, £500 (grant reference 9202):* funding to support a project to identify heat loss hot spots in homes using a thermal imaging camera. Advice and support on the reduction of any identified heat loss will then be provided.

5. Community Challenge Fund review

5.1. The Community Challenge Fund was established in 2009 and subsequently re-launched in 2014 to reflect the revised priorities of the Rural Delivery Strategy. On the advice of the Lead Member for Rural Affairs, a review of the scheme is now underway. This review will look at the scope of the scheme, the appropriateness of the grant criteria, as well as the way it is administered and promoted. As part of this process there will also be consultation with the Hampshire Association of Local Councils, individual Parish and Town Councils and community organisations. This will focus upon gauging ongoing interest in the scheme and what may be done to make it even more effective in supporting small scale projects and initiatives in rural areas.

5.2. It is suggested that any proposed changes to the scheme be reported to the Executive Member for Policy and Resources for consideration at his Decision Day in March 2016. This will be with a view to re-launching the scheme in April 2016.

6. Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that:

- 6.1. The Executive Member for Policy and Resources approves the projects set out in paragraph 4 of this report.
- 6.2. The Executive Member for Policy and Resources endorses a review of the Community Challenge Fund, with a view to any proposed changes being brought to the Executive Member for consideration at his Decision Day in March 2016.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	Yes
Maximising well-being:	Yes
Enhancing our quality of place:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rural Delivery Strategy funding proposals	6626	July 2015
Hampshire County Council's Rural Delivery Strategy	6410	February 2015
Rural Delivery Strategy funding proposals	6282	December 2014
Rural Delivery Strategy funding proposals	5940	July 2014
Hampshire County Council's Rural Delivery Strategy	5684	March 2014
Rural Delivery Strategy: review of progress 2009-2013	4835	April 2013
Funding for Rural Delivery Strategy projects: performance against 2011/12 and project proposals for 2012/13	4048	June 2012
Rural Delivery Strategy - progress and future direction	3372	November 2011
Funding for Rural Delivery Strategy projects	3001	June 2011
Funding for Rural Delivery Strategy projects	1799	July 2010
Rural Delivery Action Plan for Hampshire County Council – progress and performance	1127	January 2010
Rural Delivery Action Plan	865	August 2009
Rural Delivery Strategy for Hampshire County Council – consultation and development		March 2009
Rural Delivery Strategy for Hampshire County Council		July 2008

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- a) The proposals are expected to have a high positive impact on people living in rural areas. No negative impacts are anticipated.
- b) Revised priorities for the County Council's Rural Delivery Strategy were agreed by Cabinet in March 2014 (Report 5684) with priority actions supporting community resilience, challenging rural isolation and loneliness, rural transport, self-help, communications, and economic development. It is proposed to maintain these priorities. An equality impact assessment of specific projects or funding requests is requested when necessary.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. Support for more vulnerable groups and the infrastructure and networks to deliver it will reduce isolation and exposure to criminal acts. More vibrant and active communities are likely to suffer less crime and anti-social behaviour.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Through supporting local facilities it would reduce the need to travel.

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

The initiatives proposed support the culture of self-help and self-reliance which are critical following severe weather.