

**HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****Decision Report**

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
<b>Date:</b>	29 September 2016
<b>Title:</b>	Rural Delivery Strategy: Approvals for funding
<b>Reference:</b>	7747
<b>Report From:</b>	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 2016/17. 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, to be delivered by the County Council and partners, and two applications 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.
- 2.2. The Community Challenge Fund was 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).
- 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, Councillor Edward Heron, the Lead Member for Rural Affairs, and Councillor Rob Humby, the Executive Member for Environment and Transport, who are supportive of the recommendations.

### 3. Finance

- 3.1. The Rural Delivery Strategy budget for 2016/17 is £252,000 (this includes a balance of £52,000 carried forward from 2015/16). £116,662 of this budget has been allocated, approved by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources at his Decision Days in April 2016 (report 7282) and June 2016 (report 7483) and by the Executive Member for Environment and Transport in May 2016 (see paragraph 5).
- 3.2. Three proposals have been received for consideration, for funding totalling £80,000, to be allocated from the Rural Delivery Strategy budget (see funding summary in Table 1. and detail in paragraph 4). Approval is also being sought for a rolling annual allocation from the Rural Delivery Strategy budget for the County Council's membership of the Rural Services Network (see paragraph 5).

Proposal	Funding recommended
Hitting the Cold Spots	£42,000
Rural schools intergenerational project extension	£27,750
Building capacity and understanding working with Parish Councils and volunteers (countryside access)	£10,250
<b>Total</b>	<b>£80,000</b>

Table 1. Rural funding proposal summary

- 3.3. The Community Challenge Fund budget for 2016/17 is £31,400. £10,500 of this budget has already been allocated, approved by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources at his Decision Day in April 2016 (report 7282).
- 3.4. Two new applications to the Community Challenge Fund have been received; recommended funding totals £7,550 (see paragraph 6).

### 4. Funding proposals

- 4.1. **Hitting the cold spots, £42,000:** a continuation of the successful initiative, working in rural areas of Hampshire to deliver practical solutions for vulnerable individuals and families who are struggling to heat their homes and/or water. This includes assistance with heating bills, system repairs or replacements and first time central heating. Demand has remained steady over the five years of the project, at 25-30% of clients living in rural areas. Further funding will also allow an appropriate response to new government priorities, including first time central heating, solid wall insulation, renewable and/or district heating and non-gas boiler replacements e.g. oil or LPG. Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding will be secured to support this wherever possible. Typically the project leverages approximately 50% match-funding from external sources as well as household contributions. In 2015 an additional £337,000 was secured from the Department for Energy and

Climate Change to support delivering first time central heating into the properties of vulnerable older people and families.

- 4.2. **Rural schools intergenerational project extension, £27,750:** £38,000 was awarded in 2015/16 for ten rural schools across Hampshire to be developed into health and wellbeing hubs and provide part of the solution to the problem of rural social isolation. The project has already seen many positive results, for example St Mary's school in Bentworth has seen the children work with targeted members of the community on various activities including arts and crafts, baking, knitting and fitness sessions. They also have a parent representative in each of the six villages served by the school to contact members of the community at risk of isolation. It is proposed to use the additional funding to extend the project to include a further six schools, including two secondary schools on the urban-rural fringe. The project would also continue to develop resources for schools not involved in the project, such as the intergenerational gardening project pack, and they will be encouraged to think about how they can also develop their school into a community resource.
- 4.3. **Building capacity and understanding working with Parish Councils and volunteers (countryside access), £10,250:** Parish Council Path Wardens and volunteer groups act as the eyes and ears for rights of way and access issues in their local areas, as well as resolving a number of access problems themselves without the need for County Council involvement. Funding is sought to maximise this potential: a) through the provision of path warden training, via a series of six workshops held across the county; b) a stock of 30 volunteer warden toolkits and associated guidance to be distributed to Path Wardens to help improve the quality, consistency and safety of the work undertaken; c) a stock of 30 ditch crossing renewal kits for volunteers to install when an issue is identified. The project will be a pilot to gauge the response from existing pro-active parishes and build with others. It is also anticipated that it will increase uptake in the Small Grants Scheme Countryside Access, bringing in the associated Parish Council match funding, as well as providing another connection to the Parish Lengthsman scheme.

## 5. Rolling funding approval

- 5.1. In May 2016 the Executive Member for Environment and Transport, acting in his additional capacity at the time, as Lead Member for Rural Affairs, approved the allocation of £2,350 for the 2016/17 annual membership of the Rural Services Network.
- 5.2. The Rural Services Network represents the interests of rural service providers and their rural communities in England. Membership includes around 150 Local Authorities across the country as well as over 100 non Local Authority Service providers in both the public and private sector. An evaluation of the benefits of membership and what could be done by the County Council to make the most of this will be conducted before membership is renewed each year.

- 5.3. Providing Officers, in consultation with the Lead Member for Rural Affairs, see value in continuing membership, advance approval is sought to allocate future annual membership fees from the Rural Delivery Strategy budget.

## **6. Community Challenge Fund**

- 6.1. The Community Challenge Fund offers 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 two applications to this scheme, both of which support the community resilience and self-help priorities of the scheme.
- 6.2. ***Dementia friendly rural communities, £5,000 requested (grant reference 11450)***: project to assess the challenges faced by those living with dementia in rural areas, identify what support would be useful for them, and implement practical solutions to address this (e.g. through the creation of a Dementia Friendly Café drop-in). The experiences learned from working with two pilot parishes (Swanmore and Hurstbourne Tarrant), will be used to create a toolkit to support creating Dementia Friendly Villages across Hampshire.

Officers support the project in principle but consider some of the costs associated with the development of the project to be too high. A reduced offer of £3,000 is therefore recommended on the condition that the applicant works closely with colleagues in Adults Services in the development of the project, to ensure the long term sustainability of the model, to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure existing resources are fully utilised.

- 6.3. ***Community building energy audits, £4,550 requested (grant reference 11431)***: Action Hampshire operates an advice service for community buildings (e.g. village halls, community centres, church halls etc.). These buildings play a vital part in rural community life, but many are run on a tight budget by a management committee of volunteers and no paid staff. This project will provide subsidised energy audits for six community buildings in rural Hampshire, which will identify actions to reduce energy use, many of which will be cheap or free to carry out (e.g. fitting draft excluders, setting heating controls properly) and will instantly see reductions in energy use and the associated costs. A workshop will then be held, open to other community buildings, to share ideas and further information about energy use reduction measures. A resource pack will also be produced, to be made available to all community buildings across the county, which will provide specific case studies from those buildings that have received the subsidised audits and the measures they have taken to save energy and reduce running costs. It will also build on the generic information already available to make it relevant and encourage peer support.

Officers view the proposed activity to be worthwhile and represent good value for money when taking into account the potential for wider learning from other communities. It is recommended that the full amount requested (£4,550) be awarded.

**7. Recommendation(s)**

It is recommended that the Executive Member for Policy and Resources:

- 7.1. Approves the proposals set out in paragraph 4 of this report, for funding totalling £80,000.
- 7.2. Approves the rolling annual fee for the membership of the Rural Services Network (currently £2,350), as outlined in paragraph 5 of this report.
- 7.3. Approves the applications to the Community Challenge Fund, and associated conditions, set out in paragraph 6 of this report, for funding totalling £7,550.

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

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

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rural Delivery Strategy funding proposals	7483	June 2016
Rural Delivery Strategy funding proposals	7282	April 2016
Rural Delivery Strategy funding proposals	5940	July 2014
Hampshire County Council's Rural Delivery Strategy	5684	March 2014

**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.)**

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
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. 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?

The provision of energy audits will help to identify measures to reduce energy consumption. Supporting local facilities also reduces 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 community resilience in rural areas.