

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Executive Decision Record:

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date of Decision:	25 January 2010
Decision Title:	Rural Delivery Strategy Update
Decision Reference:	1127
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs

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1) The Decision:

a) That Cabinet:

- 1.1. endorses progress achieved particularly the impact made within local rural communities in the delivery of the action plan and accompanying projects aimed at tackling the priorities set by Cabinet.
- 1.2. fully supports the current partnership initiatives underway, the gearing of investment achieved, and the need to invest further in priority work.
- 1.3. welcomes the positive external profile achieved by Hampshire County Council including comments provided by the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) and the Audit Commission in the County Councils Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) report
- 1.4. supports the full engagement by Hampshire County Council in the proposed rural conference to be held in Spring 2010 and organised through the Hampshire Rural Forum.

2) Reasons for the decision

- 2.1. April 2009 Cabinet approved action plans containing 120 actions to be progressed corporately by all County Council Departments. The action plan was a means to "rural proof" the delivery of key services delivered in rural communities. As of late November 2009, approximately 90% of these actions were underway with a significant number on track. Cross departmental support for the corporate rural programme remains firm and the corporate coordination group is currently developing the focus for next year's work programme, developing both the priorities agreed by Cabinet and issues identified by the Audit Commission.

- 2.2. In addition to the action plans approved by Cabinet in April 2009 the Executive Member for Rural Affairs, Human Resources and Skills Development approved £154,000 funding for 6 projects meeting the priorities agreed by Cabinet. These were approved in August 2009 with all projects requiring match funding to enable them to proceed. A summary of these projects together with their status is set out in Appendix 1. As part of this process £10,000 was allocated to a Community Challenge Fund to enable parish councils and community and voluntary groups to bring forward small scale projects for improvements in their communities. Funding was awarded to nine community-led projects, which are also detailed at Appendix 1.
- 2.3. The six major funded projects referred to in 4.1 are testing new and innovative ways of delivering rural services. There are also nine community-led projects, helping deliver the County Council's objectives for rural service delivery. All funded projects have drawn in substantial amounts of external match funding. Of the funded projects it is estimated that £154,000 of County Council investment will help facilitate a combined investment of £670,000 in rural areas across the County. The £10,000 allocated to the nine community challenge fund projects proved particularly effective in helping lever in external resources, both financially and in kind. Programmes such as this are highly popular and cost effective in enabling communities to unlock resources at a local level.
- 2.4. In terms of the impact achieved so far the County Council has already received some very positive feedback with some of the responses associated with the support given shown in Appendix 3. In terms of the distribution of support the map in Appendix 4 shows the spread of grants, advice and projects undertaken or underway as of December 2009. The work undertaken so far has also been recognised by the Audit Commission as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process and they see further challenges ahead for the organisation. The Audit Commission notes that *"Work to address rural access issues in Hampshire is under way but there is no overall plan which all the organisations serving rural communities are signed up to. This is important in making sure that all people can easily access services."* (Area Assessment, p6). The Audit Commission has identified rural work as a priority for next year's inspection.

3) Other options considered and rejected:

Not applicable

4) Conflicts of Interest:

4.1. Conflicts of interest declared by the decision-maker: None

4.2. Conflicts of interest declared by other Executive Members consulted: None

5) Dispensation granted by the Standards Committee:

None

6) **Any reasons for the matter being dealt with if urgent :**
Not applicable

7) **Statement from the Decision Maker:**

Approved by:

Date:

25 January 2010

**Councillor T K Thornber CBE
Chairman of the Cabinet**