

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Decision Report**

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Economic Development and Rural Affairs
Date of Decision:	28 June 2011
Decision Title:	Funding for Rural Delivery Strategy projects: performance against 2010/11 and project proposals for 2011/12
Decision Reference:	3001
Report From:	Director of Culture Communities and Business Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to determine the allocation of funding for projects arising from priorities identified by Hampshire County Council's Rural Delivery Strategy. £200,000 funding for rural projects has been agreed for a third year. The paper identifies 18 potential projects for consideration for funding, which accord with the County Council's rural priorities agreed by Cabinet in April 2009.
- 1.2. The report also summarises performance against last year's allocated funding.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. The focus of Hampshire County Council's Rural Delivery Strategy is on improving the quality of services delivered by Hampshire County Council and its partners in rural areas, and increasing value for money.
- 2.2. The recommendations in this report follow the direction of travel of the 'Open for Business' report to Cabinet in January 2011 which sought *"an extension and development of our rural policy objectives involving a review of housing related activity, economic activity and social and wellbeing matters. ... Creating a (revised) set of rural objectives would be a starting point"*.
- 2.3. Additionally, the response of the County Council to present pressures such as the reduced capacity to deliver new initiatives calls for its rural policy to be re-aligned with current resources so that the significant impact of this work can be sustained.
- 2.4. Accordingly, it is proposed to develop new principles around these priorities for Executive Member funding: involving others to lead and

deliver on projects; a continued focus on maximising leverage of County Council investment; build on outcomes of pilot projects; ensure continued support for small community-based project partnerships; and ensure that sufficient capacity is available for successful implementation.

- 2.5. The focus for funding is on commissioning and transformation, with continued emphasis on partnership and working with external partners. Accordingly, external partners have been invited to apply for funding.

3. Funding for 2010/11 projects: performance

- 3.1. In 2010/11 the Executive Member for Economic Development and Rural Affairs funded 14 rural projects. Of these, 10 proceeded as planned, 3 were delayed (mainly due to in year pressures arising from the pace of change within the County Council) but are expected to be completed, with only one workstream unable to proceed.
- 3.2. All funded projects have drawn in substantial amounts of external match funding. Of the funded projects it is estimated that £179,900 of County Council investment helped facilitate a combined investment of almost £1million in rural Hampshire. Of this, £605,000 was generated as external investment. An additional £190,000 was invested by County Council Departments as match funding. Despite the challenging economic climate the level of 'gearing' achieved through the total match funding generated increased to 5.4 times gearing this year, compared to 4.3 in the previous year.
- 3.3. Eight community-led projects were awarded funding from the £10,000 Community Challenge Fund. Of these 7 were completed and grants claimed by the end of 2010/11. The fund 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.
- 3.4. These funded projects are testing new and innovative ways of delivering rural services. They are also helping deliver the County Council's objectives for rural service delivery. In terms of the distribution of support the map at Appendix 2 shows the spread of grants, advice and projects undertaken as a result of grants made over the previous two years.
- 3.5. Significant progress has been made with the funded rural partnership projects. The impact of this work is reflected in the feedback that is being received from organisations operating within rural communities. The profile and reputation of Hampshire County Council and its work in this area has developed very considerably. Future progress will hinge upon sustaining this activity and continuing to develop innovative ideas both internally and with all those organisations operating in, or supporting, our rural communities.

4. Budget position

- 4.1. For 2011/12 financial year the Executive Member for Economic Development and Rural Affairs has available a further £200,000 of funding to support rural projects. Of this, £141,700 has been identified for initial grant funding of the specific improvement projects listed at Appendix 1 of this report. This funding is in parallel with the departmental action plans which are being taken forward within existing resources.
- 4.2. It is again proposed to allocate £10,000 of this sum to a Community Challenge Fund to enable parish councils and community and voluntary groups to bring forward small scale projects or improvements in their communities. Additionally, an £18,000 grant has been made available to Community Action Hampshire to support the Village Halls Advisor post for a third year, though this is likely to be the final year that such support can be given.
- 4.3 The balance remaining will be allocated later in the year to provide additional investment to the most successful projects, and may also be used to support new initiatives such as the M3 Local Enterprise Partnership and joint projects supporting rural policy development.

5. Funding Criteria

- 5.1. Projects are required to meet one or more of the following priorities agreed by Cabinet in April 2009.
 - Supporting sustainable rural communities. (To include affordable housing, rural broadband, access to services, supporting volunteering, and community engagement.)
 - Providing effective rural transport
 - Farming, food and access to the countryside
 - Economic prosperity
 - Climate change, including renewable energy, and making better use of the county's wood-fuel resource.
- 5.2. All projects are required to focus on deliverable outcomes and to be implemented within a reasonable time-scale. Projects are expected to lever in additional external match funding, including 'in-kind' contributions, though this has been very challenging in the current economic climate. Project leads were also asked to identify how their projects would continue once this one off funding has ceased in order to identify interventions that should be sustainable in the future.

6. List of Projects

- 6.1. 22 outline bids were submitted to the Executive Member by the deadline of May 2011. Four were subsequently withdrawn, mainly due to challenges in obtaining the match funding required. 18 bids were reviewed in outline by the Executive Member in conjunction with officers, and were taken forward for detailed consideration and revision as necessary. As a result 17 projects, summarised in Appendix 1, have

now been finalised and are the subject of the recommendations set out in Appendix 1.

7. Risks

- 7.1. Inevitably there are risks associated with these projects but they have been assessed as part of the feasibility process and there is a high degree of confidence that they can be managed or overcome.
- 7.2. *Risk:* There is a risk that not all external match funding will be obtained as anticipated, meaning projects cannot go ahead without additional HCC funding or significant reduction in the impact of specific projects. There may also be unexpected delays in external approval of funding sought. *Response:* Much of the funding has been identified or is close to being secured - (assessed as low level risk).
- 7.3. *Risk:* All projects are reliant on partnership working. Should partnerships not flourish there is a risk of projects not being completed. *Response:* The partnerships involved are both internal and external but build upon established and tested relationships rather than solely new and untried arrangements - (assessed as low level risk).
- 7.4. *Risk:* Reputational damage if any project fails to deliver: any pilot project or innovation must carry some risk of failure and this underpins the ability and willingness to try new approaches. *Response:* These projects have been assessed against specific criteria and priorities and link strongly to the expertise and experience of colleagues across the organisations requesting grants. (As such this risk is assessed as low / moderate). In the event of any underspend or failure of an individual project, consideration will be given to reallocating any residual funds across the other projects in accordance with the priorities agreed by Cabinet.
- 7.5. The progress of funded projects will be monitored by the corporate rural group and reported to the Executive Member on a regular basis.

8. Timescale

- 8.1. The projects identified are ready for immediate implementation and although there will be variation within each project, the majority of projects are scheduled for completion by March 2012. A number of the more complex projects will run on into next financial year.

9. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Executive Member for Economic Development and Rural Affairs:

1. Approves projects and grant allocations set out in Appendix 1.
2. Makes the award of grants dependent on the provision of match funding of at least equivalent value.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to Previous member decisions:		
Title	Ref	Date
Rural Delivery Strategy for Hampshire County Council	Item 5.a1 – 5.a5	July 2008
Rural Delivery Strategy for Hampshire County Council – Consultation and Development	Item 8(i) – 8(ii)	March 2009
Rural Delivery Action Plan for Hampshire County Council Decision Report	Item 7 865	April 2009 August 2009
Rural Delivery Action Plan for Hampshire County Council – Progress and Performance	1127	January 2010
Funding for Rural Delivery Strategy projects	1799	July 2010
Direct Links to Specific Legislation or Government Directives		
Title		Date

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.)

Document

Location

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- a) Successful implementation will reduce inequalities by improving service delivery in rural areas and increase access to services. Full Equalities Impact Assessment at <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/rural-strategy.pdf>

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- a) Some projects have a focus on reducing crime and disorder. e.g. through working with ACSOs, the Tile Barn climbing tower will help tackle boredom and anti-social behaviour.

3. Climate Change:

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

More effective and efficient service delivery is expected to reduce the County Council's carbon footprint and energy consumption. E.g. the 'rural transport initiative challenge fund' will help rural communities improve travel options, giving people the option to reduce their dependence on private cars.

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

These projects helps communities to become more resilient and self-sufficient, and less dependent on services delivered from outside, which can be disrupted by adverse weather such as floods and snow. Extreme weather is predicted to increase under climate change. e.g.s of projects supported: community buildings fund, older driver skills, rural transport challenge fund.

Recommendation for Rural Funding 2011/12

Project Name	Project Description	Match Funding predicted	Grant Requested	Grant Recommended
Village Halls Advisor	Funding for the Village Halls Advisor post at Community Action Hampshire.	£5,000	£18,000	£18,000
Community Challenge Fund	Grants of up to £2,500 for rural communities taking forward projects that meet HCC's rural strategy objectives. Subject to provision of match funding of at least equal value.	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
Computer Learning Centres	Age Concern. Funding would enable Age Concern to roll out its computer learning centres to rural Hampshire.	£25,000	£13,500	£12,500
Hampshire School of Social Entrepreneurs (CAH)	Community Action Hampshire. To equip Hampshire's emerging social entrepreneurs with skills in financial management.	£0	£7,600	£7,500
Rural Areas Play Project	East Hampshire District Council. RAPP will provide a series of play sessions in deprived rural areas through the expansion of the existing programme and new development. RAPP will train develop and support play champions in identified rural villages in the area stimulating community cohesion and involvement in the project.	£22,666	£7,565	£7,500

Project Name	Project Description	Match Funding predicted	Grant Requested	Grant Recommended
Biodiversity Grants Scheme	To assist Parish and Town Councils with the appropriate conservation management of protected areas for biodiversity in Hampshire.	£15,000	£10,000	£5,000
Community Buildings Fund	During 2010 23 projects were funded, 14 of which were designated as rural. The applicants are Village Hall Trusts or similar bodies who are supporting a local facility which is often the only neutral public space in rural areas.	£100,000	£25,000	£25,000
Changing Places Toilets	To increase the number of Changing Places Toilets in rural areas across Hampshire. A changing Places Toilet is different from a standard accessible toilet, it is a room equipped with an adjustable changing bench and hoist.	£10,000	£40,000	£10,000
Culture in the Classroom	This project gives families who do not currently make great use of local museums and arts the chance to experience a range of activity within museums, galleries and arts centres in order to help them develop an inspired response to what they encounter - through visual arts, film, literature and performance.	£10,000	£5,000	£3,000

Project Name	Project Description	Match Funding predicted	Grant Requested	Grant Recommended
Gypsies and Travellers Community Agent	Creation of a Community Agent in the Gypsy and Traveller community. This would be a proactive trusted local contact who will support vulnerable people to make positive life choices and remain independent and live well, following the Village Agent model that has been so successful elsewhere in England, and which is now being piloted in Hampshire.	tbc	£25,700	£10,000
Landscape toolkit	This project would take forward the interest and impetus within communities to develop action plans and to undertake their own environmental projects and initiatives.	£8,000	£4,000	£3,000
Miles without Stiles	The Countryside Service has been funding the removal of stiles and their replacement with gaps or gates. Stiles create a barrier to access to the countryside and their removal makes a significant contribution to the accessibility of the rights of way network, which is of particular importance to improving access for the elderly, the mobility impaired, parents with buggies, children and dog walkers.	£15,000	£12,500	£5,000
Mini Museums	Mini Museums give rural schools which don't make great use of local museums the chance to develop their own 'museum in a classroom' by training pupils to understand, care for and interpret objects in order to create exhibitions that inform, educate and inspire their wider communities.	£10,000	£5,000	£3,000

Project Name	Project Description	Match Funding predicted	Grant Requested	Grant Recommended
Rural Play for All	The project aims to mainstream play provision, using volunteers and community organisations such as Parish Councils, in response to the withdrawal of the majority of Play sector funding streams. It would encourage and influence community organisations to create more opportunities for quality play in creative rural spaces, in particular in outdoor spaces other than fixed play areas.	£10,600	£10,000	£4,000
Rural Transport Initiative Challenge Fund	To provide a Rural Transport Initiative Challenge Fund which will help local communities to develop and complement their own transport solutions to local transport needs in order to improve the travel options which people have to access services.	£3,500	£20,000	£5,000
Tile Barn Climbing Tower	Working with the ACSOs, the Tile Barn mobile climbing wall will visit rural communities to tackle boredom and anti-social behaviour during the school summer holidays.	£2,380	£1,190	£1,200
Walk on the Wild Side	walk on the Wild Side aims to increase the number of black and minority ethnic (BME) people visiting the local countryside in Hampshire. Through a series of workshops, organised walks and site visits we will provide participants with a variety of experiences to help them understand and enjoy what the natural environment has to offer.	£97,200	£12,000	£12,000
Total		£344,346	£227,055	£141,700