

**HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Decision Report**

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
<b>Date:</b>	1 December 2010
<b>Title:</b>	Hampshire Alliance for Rural and Affordable Housing
<b>Decision Reference:</b>	2238
<b>Report From:</b>	Joint report of the Director of Property, Business and Regulatory Services and County Treasurer's

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**1. Executive Summary**

1.1. The purpose of this report is to recommend the continuation of the County Council's contribution of £40,000 per annum to the Hampshire Alliance for Rural and Affordable Housing, for a further three years from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014.

**2. Contextual information**

2.1. The Hampshire Alliance for Rural and Affordable Housing (HARAH) is an alliance of public sector partners, the main purpose of which is to increase the provision of rural affordable housing in Hampshire to support the sustainability of rural communities. It comprises the six mainly rural local authorities in Hampshire (Basingstoke & Deane, East Hampshire, Hart, New Forest, Test Valley and Winchester), the New Forest National Park Authority, the Homes and Communities Agency, Community Action Hampshire, and of course the County Council. It has appointed Hyde Martlett Housing Association as a Registered Social Landlords (RSL) partner to deliver affordable housing schemes.

2.2. HARAH is governed by a Member Board comprising representatives from each partner; the County Council's representative is Councillor Carol Leversha. Its day-to-day activities are undertaken by officers from within the constituent authorities, and by Rural Housing Enablers who are funded by HARAH and currently employed by Community Action Hampshire. A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed between the partners, which identifies the objectives of the alliance and the governance arrangements.

2.3. Each public sector partner provides modest funding to allow HARAHA to operate. For the past three years, the County Council has contributed £40,000 per annum, but this arrangement finishes on 31 March 2011. Each partner is being asked by the HARAHA Members Board to agree to continue its funding for a further period.

### **3. HARAHA's Performance**

3.1. Delivering rural affordable housing is notoriously difficult, and many agencies have struggled. There are a number of reasons for this, most notably:

- Restrictive planning policies that protect the character of rural communities and restrict new development in the countryside.
- The cost of delivering rural affordable housing tends to be higher than urban housing as there is often a planning requirement to reflect local architectural styles, and essential services such as drainage, water, electricity and gas can be expensive to provide.
- To make the units affordable, land prices must be kept low, and it is often difficult to persuade local landowners to sell.

3.2. Against this difficult background, HARAHA has made reasonable progress in delivering new rural housing. By March 2011 it will have completed 119 new homes in Hampshire, many in locations where affordability is a real concern. Recent schemes include Ropley, Preston-Candover, Swanmore and Littleton. It currently has 19 units under construction (in Upton Grey and Boldre), a further 8 units are about to start on site, and 73 are in planning.

3.3. The Rural Housing Enablers regularly attend Parish Council meetings and community consultations to discuss possible opportunities, to give general advice and answer questions, and to advise how best to promote new schemes. HARAHA aims to share best practice in the promotion and the delivery of new rural housing schemes, and has itself been quoted as an example of best practice by the Homes and Communities Agency.

### **4. Finance**

4.1. HARAHA is funded by the partner organisations, and the County Council has contributed £40,000 per annum for the past three years. It is proposed to continue this level of funding for the forthcoming three years (1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014).

4.2 The County Council's contribution is currently funded from an earmarked reserve, which was established from the additional Council tax income generated by reducing the second homes discount in the first year of the scheme.

### **5. Recommendation**

5.1. That the continuation of the County Council's contribution of £40,000 per annum to the Hampshire Alliance for Rural and Affordable Housing for a further three years from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014, be approved.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	Yes
Corporate Improvement Plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	Yes
Corporate Improvement Plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	Yes
Corporate Improvement Plan link number (if appropriate):	

**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:**

- 1.1. An equalities impact assessment has been considered in the development of this report and no adverse impact has been identified.

**2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

- 2.1. The County Council has a legal obligation under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to consider the impact of all the decisions it makes on the prevention of crime. The proposals in this report have no impact on the prevention of crime

**3. Climate Change:**

- 3.1. All new social housing is constructed to at least code level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- 3.2. The provision of rural affordable housing is often essential if people who work in rural locations and who are in relatively less fortunate positions are to have any prospect of living close to where they work, thus reducing unnecessary travel.

**FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTEES:****OTHER EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:**

<b>Executive Member &amp; Portfolio</b>	<b>Reason for Consultation</b>	<b>Date Consulted</b>	<b>Response:</b>

**OTHER FORMAL CONSULTEES:**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Reason for Consultation</b>	<b>Date Consulted</b>	<b>Response:</b>
Councillor Carol Leversha	County Council's representative on the Member Board	3.11.10	Councillor Leversha confirmed that she supported this proposal and commented that HCC funding was critical at this time.