

Hertfordshire County Council

Hertfordshire Rural Forum Phase 1

Proposal

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Introduction

1. This proposal is based on the outline route map proposed in our e-mail of 17 March 2005.
2. It covers the first 3 stages of the route map, namely:
 - Stage 1, Setting the Aims and Objectives
 - Stage 2, Dissemination, consultation and revision
 - Stage 3, Options for an organisational model.

We have designated these Stages as 'Phase 1' and information about what is involved in each follows below.

3. We are proposing that Stage 4 of the route map, *Formulating an action programme*, plus an additional intermediate stage of getting the organisational model agreed by the members, are dealt with separately. This work we are calling Phase 2.
4. Splitting the work in this way will enable the Advisory Group to assess the progress made to date and provide further input as to the best way in which to proceed.

Note:

It will be important to advise all HRF members in advance of the actions proposed and of their intended involvement.

We suggest this is done by e-mail or letter, plus a message on the web site, before the first Stage is initiated.

1. Stage 1, Setting the Aims and Objectives

Output

A draft Statement of Aims and Objectives for the HRF, agreed by the Advisory Group and ready for putting out to consultation.

Methodology

1. To prepare the draft Statement, we will:

- a) Undertake a simple PEST (Political, Economic, Social and Technological) analysis of the macro-environment in which the HRF operates.

The purpose of this is to identify the external trends affecting the rural communities of Hertfordshire. We will prepare an initial version of the PEST analysis using the information already available to us, and then invite the Secretariat to contribute its on-the-ground knowledge to the analysis.

- b) Review the historic information about the HRF that we have on file, including the outputs from the meeting and workshop on 25 February 2005.

The purpose of this review will be to capture the aspirations of the Forum's members.

2. The Statement will be aspirational, not organisational. It will be short and bullet pointed.

3. At the end of the Stage, we will present a draft Statement to a meeting of the Advisory Group, and invite them to make any amendments and endorse what is agreed. We consider this endorsement as being important in providing an element of leadership in the future of the Forum.

Timescale

3-4 weeks.

2. Stage 2, Dissemination, consultation and revision

Once the Advisory Group has endorsed the draft Statement of Aims and Objectives, we will distribute it for consultation.

Output

1. The desired output of the consultation will be for each consultee to identify his level of commitment to the Aims and Objectives of the Forum.
2. We see this commitment as falling into one of three possible categories:
 1. Full agreement with the Aims and Objectives
 2. Partial agreement, or agreement with reservations
 3. No agreement or apathy.

Methodology

1. The Statement will be distributed in hard copy to all the current members of the Forum, together with any other potential members as identified by the Secretariat or the Advisory Group.

Note: It may also be worthwhile asking existing members to identify anyone else who they think should be included in the consultation.

2. Responses will be invited in writing, using a simple response form (e.g. 'Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Comment').
3. It will be emphasised to consultees that they are not being asked to make any formal commitment of time or resources to the Forum at this stage.
4. Consultees will be given contact details of the members of the Advisory Group and be invited to approach them with any queries.
5. To make the consultation more inclusive, it would be useful if the members of the Advisory Group are able to support the mail out by, for example, issuing local press releases and including details of the consultation in mailings to any appropriate networks.
6. We do not propose organising any meetings or workshops on the draft Statement. The dangers of this approach are:
 1. It can encourage lengthy, but not always beneficial, debate over individual words and phrases
 2. It would have the potential of undermining the leadership assumed by the Advisory Group.

In addition, meetings are inherently exclusive – not everyone may be able to attend, nor is everyone confident operating in this environment.

7. We will analyse the responses from the consultation and present a summary report to a meeting of the Advisory Group. This purpose of this meeting will be to decide whether any amendments are needed to the draft Statement.

8. If the amendments are considerable, then it will be necessary to return to the consultees in some manner to seek their endorsement of the revised draft Statement.

However, if the amendments are slight, the Advisory Group should close this Stage by formally adopting the Statement and re-issuing it to the members.

Timescale

6-8 weeks.

3. Stage 3, Options for an organisational model

After the Aims and Objectives have been adopted, we will prepare an options paper on organisational models that could be used for their delivery.

Output

An options paper on organisational models.

Methodology

1. We will consult with the Secretariat as to its existing views as to suitable models.
2. We will also carry out some comparator research in the form of structured telephone interviews with the secretariat or Chairs of up to 3 other rural forums. The forums to be included in the research will be agreed with the Advisory Group.
3. We will present the options paper to a meeting of the Advisory Group for their consideration, and consider with the Advisory Group how the organisational model is to be put to the members for agreement.

Currently, we suggest the preferred model is sent out to members as a Recommended Proposal from the Advisory Group.

Please note:

At this time, we do not envisage providing costings for the organisational options since, to be able to do so, the costing base for each will need to be determined beforehand.

Timescale

4-6 weeks.

4. Fee proposal including detailed breakdown of costs

Our fee for carrying out the work as set out in Section 1 above is £9,450 plus VAT and travel.

Meetings

We have allowed for attending three meetings of the Advisory Group, one at the end of each Stage.

Reports and papers

We have allowed for providing 2 hard copies, plus an electronic copy, of the reports and papers specified in the text.

Invoicing arrangements

Invoices will be submitted on a monthly basis for payment in 28 days.

Support expected from the client

1. Distribute an advice note to the members of the Forum about the planned work and their involvement in it.
2. Input from the Secretariat to the PEST analysis in Stage 1.
3. Details of consultees and provision of full contact details (Stage 2).
4. Publicity for the consultation (Stage 2).
5. Advice on other rural forums to be researched in Stage 3.
6. A single point of contact between Advisory Group meetings.
7. Consistent and timely decision making.