

RSCP Consultation/Local Area Agreement – Rural Proofing event

Friday 25 November 2005 - Red Lion Hotel Hatfield

The Herts Rural Forum together with the Community Development Agency for Herts held an event to discuss both the emerging Rural Social Community Business Plan (RSCP) and the Local Area Agreement. The event was in two halves with the RSCP being discussed through workshops in the morning and the LAA being the subject of the afternoon's discussion. Delegates attended from a range of organisations and the outputs from each session are summarised below.

Andrew	Burt	Herts County Council
Angela	Spencer	Herts Prosperity Ltd
Carina	Helm	Herts Assoc of Parish & Town Council
Caroline	Banks	Dacorum District CAB
Duncan	Adams	CDA for Herts
Emily	Butterworth	Herts Prosperity Ltd
Eve	Walker	Dacorum CAB
Hannah	Fox	GO-East
Herbert	Dzapata	CDA for Herts
Ian	Smith	Codicote/Chair, Rural Housing Enabler Steering group
Joel	Carré	CDA for Herts
John	Howley	Aldenham PC
Pam	Halliwell	Dacorum Borough Council
Paul	Pullen	East Herts District Council
Peter	Davidson	Herts County Council
Rachel	Bayliss	Herts County Council
Richard	Morgan	Church of England
Rikki	Harcourt	Herts Visual Arts Forum
Sally	Salisbury	North Herts CAB
Sarvjeet	Dosanjh	Adult and Community Learning Herts County Council
Sheila	Pilkington	Markyate PC
Steph	Gallagher	Herts Infrastructure Consortium
Tom	Davidson	CPRE Herts Society
Tony	Harcourt	Herts Visual Arts Forum
Trevor	Mose	Herts County Council

Part 1: Notes from morning workshops discussing RSCP business plan

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE STRAND

- Good support for social enterprise development and support – participants thought that this would help small rural community facilities remain/become sustainable.
- Useful areas for social enterprise support to focus on:
- Community centres/village halls – issues arising in discussion were multi-purpose usage, rationalisation of centres in particular locations, discretionary/differential charging rates for users
 - Community transport – focusing on older people or teenagers, use of minibus/community bus services or taxis, links to shopping or health appointments.
 - Changing from the grants culture – combining projects and services, focusing on communication/joint working, team working; also moving away from volunteer effort as the sole source of community input to employment of local people (relates to difficulties in small communities of finding volunteers, as there is already a huge demand in terms of governors, JPs, local leisure activities, etc).

RURAL BENEFITS TAKE-UP STRAND

- Too little money – 50k would be more realistic
- Greater engagement with local authority for publicity
- Needs setting in context to show how it fits in with everything else going on in the county
- How is it going to be sustainable?
- How will it be rolled out to the rest of the county?
- Need for more statistical evidence
- Stronger links with Parish Councils and volunteering need to be made

RURAL HOUSING ENABLER SERVICE

- Capacity of an individual to cover county?
- Housing prices are too high for locals
- Smaller houses required for first time buyers
- Sustainability after 2years?
- Need for a second classification for key worker housing
- Sheltered housing for elderly in rural areas
- Single occupancy homes

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

- IT needs for Parish and Town Councils were identified as requiring urgent capacity building. This would take the form of financial assistance for hardware, software and computer training to enable the Councils to become fully integrated within the electronic communication channels. The possibility of looking at lease arrangements for hardware (to be researched by HAPTC) Computer training has been identified as being essential to gaining access to information and improving the skills within the Council.
- Potential of IT shared support for Parish Councils from Districts or Herts CC. (HAPTC to research.)
- The Quality Parish Council scheme should be promoted within the County by HAPTC.

- Support for HAPTC in the provision of training for Clerks and Councilors within the Hertfordshire Training Partnership.
- Further development of HAPTC website in the provision of legal advice, knowledge and best practice for use by Parish and Town Councils.
- Financial support for those Councils wanting to set up Information Points within their communities.
- It was identified that there is linkage between adequately resourced parish and town councils and the delivery of other RSCP objectives, provision of Rural Benefit Take Up outreach worker where CAB officers used parish council premises. Councils should be encouraged to establish their own premises. For smaller parishes the structure of clustering or a hub and satellite approach being possible ways of producing economies of scale and improving services.
- Two issues specific to Hertfordshire for HAPTC is that only a third of the County is parished and that the size of parish and town councils ranges from budgets of over £1million to under £1,000. These parish and town councils will have very diverse resources and needs and consequently very different support requirements from the County Association.
- Provision of financial support for the implementation of action plans agreed within parish plans to complete tasks agreed by the community. There are 12 completed parish plans in Herts with another 8 being developed and another 7 Councils expressing an interest.

It was also agreed that the above could not all be included within the budget for the first year and so different priorities may apply for year 1 and year 2.

Part 2: LAA discussion

The afternoon session focussed on the emerging priorities of the four LAA blocks. Delegates were asked to identify any issues they considered were missing from the list and to challenge the emerging priorities in terms of how relevant they are to rural areas or what might they look like when applied to a rural community. The key points raised from the discussion are described below under the LAA block headings.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Limited mention of the environment throughout the initial LAA submission
- No representation of the parish and town councils on Herts Forward and yet they have a potentially important role when it comes to delivery and community representation

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Transport to school particularly secondary
- Transport to work for young people unable to drive
- Availability of transport options outside normal school hours. E.g. school to home transport for children taking part in extended school services music and sports clubs etc
- Lack of genuine and safe alternatives to car – safe cycle routes, buses etc

HEALTH AND GROWING OLDER

- Difficulty in accessing basic essential services – food shops, banking, health services GP, hospitals, post offices
- Lack of sheltered accommodation in rural communities

- Difficulty of delivering care services in rural areas due to distance of travel distribution of clients

SAFER COMMUNITIES

- Lack of local community policing support expressed by some parish representatives
- Concerns about fire safety in rural areas due to fire service changes especially around Royston
- Hidden domestic violence in small rural communities
- Particular rural crimes not addressed e.g. fly tipping and hare coursing
- Blue light response for rural areas (possible target area)
- Safety on farms – concern about abandoned machinery
- Lighting in rural areas – safety asset or blight?
- Pollution in airport flight paths
- Cleaner / greener is likely to be different in rural neighbourhoods

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

- Role of community planning (parish plans etc) in building stronger communities
- Recognising contribution of parish and town councils in delivery and key role in co-ordinating community input
- Role of volunteering in building stronger communities particularly important in rural areas to build community spirit
- Need to actively involve young people in decision making to help them feel involved in their community
- Freedom from unnecessary red-tape where it discourages volunteering

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE

- Need to better understand the skill base both need for and availability of key skills in rural areas
- Access to transport for work for those without access to cars
- Lack of business infrastructure in rural areas – available office space, ICT and availability of reliable broadband, postal services
- Inconsistent planning controls between districts – sometime stifling enterprise and diversification especially on former agricultural sites
- Available training opportunities not always targeted at small micro- businesses who are relatively time poor
- Recognise continued reliance on the car by rural residents and ensure infrastructure at stations and towns does not prejudice those who need to drive

The outcomes of the afternoon discussion will be passed on to the LAA team for inclusion in the second submission to government office in early December 2005.