

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
<b>Date:</b>	9 March 2018
<b>Title:</b>	Rural Delivery Strategy – rural delivery funding
<b>Report From:</b>	Director for Culture, Communities and Business Services

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#### 1. Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Executive Member for Policy and Resources:

- 1.1. Approves the proposals set out in paragraph 4.1-4.3 of the report, for funding totalling £75,000 from the Rural Delivery budget 2017/18, to include:
  - a £20,000 contribution to the Hitting the Cold Spots programme;
  - a £35,000 contribution to the Parish Lengthsman Scheme; and
  - a £20,000 contribution to the Village Agents scheme.
- 1.2. Approves the proposal set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report, for a £40,000 allocation to the Rural Communities Fund, from the Rural Delivery budget 2018/19.
- 1.3. Approves the Rural Communities Fund grant application set out in section 5 of the report, for a £5,950 contribution towards improvements at Chilbolton Village Stores.

#### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to outline proposals for Rural Delivery funding for 2017/18 and 2018/19. The proposals have been developed in accordance with the Rural Delivery priorities approved by Cabinet in March 2014.
- 2.2. The report outlines proposals for funding towards four initiatives to support rural communities and one application for funding from the Rural Communities Fund.

#### 3. Contextual information

- 3.1. The revised County Council Rural Delivery priority actions were agreed by Cabinet in March 2014 (report 5684). These include supporting community

resilience, rural transport, self-help, communications and economic development.

- 3.2. The funding proposals presented in this report fit within the priority actions and build on existing initiatives to maximise impact and use of available resources. The proposals have been reviewed by cross-departmental colleagues and Councillor Edward Heron, the Assistant to the Executive - Rural Affairs Champion, who are supportive of the recommendations.
- 3.3. The Rural Communities Fund is a combination of four Hampshire County Council grant schemes previously available to rural communities. It supports projects that help deliver against the Rural Delivery priority actions to build community resilience and encourage self-help. The launch of the scheme was approved by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources at his Decision Day in June 2017.

#### 4. Finance

- 4.1. The Rural Delivery budget for 2017/18 is £204,000 (including £4,000 returned due to a project underspend). £129,000 of this budget has already been allocated, approved by the Assistant to the Executive - Rural Affairs Champion in October 2017 and by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources at his Decision Days in June 2017, July 2017 and October 2017.
- 4.2. The Rural Delivery budget for 2018/19 is £200,000. £31,000 of this budget has already been allocated, approved by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources at his Decision Day in October 2017.
- 4.3. Three proposals are presented for consideration, to be allocated from the Rural Delivery budget 2017/18, for funding totalling £75,000 (see funding summary in Table 1. and detail in paragraph 4.1-4.3).

Proposal	Funding recommended
Hitting the Cold Spots	£20,000
Parish Lengthsmen	£35,000
Village Agents	£20,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£75,000</b>

Table 1. Rural funding proposal summary 2017/18

- 4.4. One proposal is presented for consideration, to be allocated from the Rural Delivery budget 2018/19, for funding totalling £40,000 (see paragraph 5.4).
- 4.5. The Rural Communities Fund budget for 2017/18 is £148,000, split across four themes (countryside access, flood alleviation, retailers and community enterprises, and general community resilience and self-help initiatives). £66,000 of this budget has already been allocated, approved by the Assistant Director for Culture and Heritage, in consultation with the Assistant

to the Executive - Rural Affairs Champion, and by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources at his Decision Day in October 2017.

- 4.6. Decision making for grant applications up to £5,000 was delegated to the Assistant Director for Culture and Heritage by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources at his decision day on 16 June 2017. One new application for funding over £5,000 has been received for consideration; this is for £5,950 from the Rural Communities Fund – retailers and community enterprises theme (see paragraph 5).

## **5. Funding proposals**

### **5.1. Hitting the Cold Spots (£20,000 requested)**

A continuation of the successful initiative, working in rural areas of Hampshire to deliver practical solutions for vulnerable individuals and families who are struggling to heat their homes and/or water. This includes assistance with heating bills, system repairs or replacements and first time central heating. The project is delivered by the Environment Centre, contracted by Adults' Health and Care until 31 March 2019.

Demand for support available through the project has remained steady since its inception, at 25-30% of clients living in rural areas (the typical client is 75-84 years, female, declared as having a disability and living alone). The need to deliver works that will benefit rural fuel poor households is set out in the recent changes in Energy Company Obligation which enables eligible households to access funding for non-gas boiler replacements e.g. oil or LPG, first time central heating and solid wall insulation.

The Socio-economic profile of rural Hampshire 2016 identified that levels of fuel poverty are highest for those living in rural communities, and furthermore that more than 50% of all households living in the most rural communities across Basingstoke and Deane, the New Forest and Test Valley, are not connected to the gas network<sup>1</sup>. Funding is requested towards practical measures for eligible households (for the period 1 April 2018- 31 March 2019) that would help to address this recognised problem facing Hampshire's rural communities. The overall Hitting the Cold Spots programme also provides rural households with access to information and advice, via a phone line and home visiting service, that is not covered by this funding.

In consideration of the direct benefits the funding could provide, as well as the overall benefits of the scheme, it is recommended that support for the project is continued with the provision of a £20,000 contribution from the Rural Delivery budget. This amount is recommended based on previous demand from households in rural areas and the predicted match funding available (approximately £20,000).

### **5.2. Parish Lengthsman (£35,000 requested)**

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<sup>1</sup> [Socio-economic profile of rural Hampshire – Fuel poverty \(2016\)](#)

The Parish Lengthsman scheme was established in 2009 involving 19 parish and town councils and has grown to 172 in 2017/18. The scheme provides funding for parish and town councils to undertake low value, low risk maintenance work around the highway. In 2015 an extension to the scheme was considered by the Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee (report 6990) to include duties on rights of way. To support this extension, and in recognition of the overall benefits of the scheme in promoting community resilience and a culture of self-help in rural areas, the Executive Member for Policy and Resources agreed a contribution of £30,000 from the Rural Delivery budget in both 2016/17 (report April 2016) and 2017/18 (report July 2017).

At the Decision Day held in January 2018 the Executive Member for Environment and Transport considered a report recommending that the scheme is continued in 2018/19, and that subject to the availability of funding, the scheme is extended to include additional parish and town councils that have expressed interest in joining prior to 31 January 2018.

The scheme is highly valued by parish and town councils as it provides a mechanism for local prioritisation and delivery. As the County Council continues to strengthen its relationship with parish and town councils, the scheme therefore provides an excellent platform for this. It also builds on the feedback from the series of workshops held with parish and town councils in September 2016, which revealed many are willing to take on greater responsibility.

In recognition of the value of the scheme, in both supporting rural communities and strengthening the relationship with parish and town councils, it is recommended that support towards the scheme is continued with the provision of a £35,000 contribution from the Rural Delivery budget. This is an increased contribution from 2017/18 in recognition of the desire to extend the scheme to allow parish councils on the waiting list to join in 2018/19.

### **5.3. Village Agents (£20,000 requested)**

The Village Agents scheme was established in 2012 supported by funding from the Rural Delivery budget. It was subsequently funded by Adults' Health and Care, with an additional grant from the Rural Delivery budget to support the expansion of the scheme in 2014/15 (report 5940).

The scheme is managed by Adults' Health and Care and has been delivered by Age Concern Hampshire. It currently supports approximately 49 volunteer Village Agents in rural communities across the County, assisting vulnerable older people to access information they need on issues such as day care, foot care, computer training, company at meal times, transport for shopping and medical appointments, finding reputable tradespeople and help around the home. Between July and September 2017 Village Agents received more than 414 enquiries from older people and made more than 76 referrals to other agencies.

In 2016 Adults' Health and Care changed its approach to the delivery of adult social care, through the Supportive Communities work stream. This

included piloting a broader approach than was previously covered by the Village Agents. There was however still seen to be value in continuing to support the delivery of the Village Agents in the short-term, and this was supported with funding from the Rural Delivery budget for an 18 month period (report 8090).

The funding for the Village Agents, and the associated contract with Age Concern Hampshire, comes to an end in March 2018 and it is proposed that the delivery model for the scheme is now brought in line with the wider Demand Management and Prevention programme (currently incorporating the Supportive Communities work stream). This will include the need to extend the scope of the scheme beyond just older people, to support others in the community identified to be socially isolated and therefore at risk of needing support and intervention from social care. This includes young mothers, carers, people from ethnic minorities and people from the LGBT community<sup>2</sup>.

Through the Demand Management and Prevention programme local communities will also be encouraged to play a more active role in local decision making through place based working. This will involve asset mapping a geographical area and encouraging local organisations to work alongside health and social care organisations to provide responsive solutions to local need.

Incorporating the Village Agents into this new way of working will ensure volunteers can continue to be identified in rural areas, based on the needs of the local community. This will include a potential role for parish and town councils in supporting existing Village Agents as well as helping to develop and support new Village Agents where there is a desire to do so. This model will also support the Corporate programme to develop a closer working relationship with parish and town councils, as outlined in the 'Working better together' report presented to Cabinet in June 2017.

The proposed approach to delivering the Village Agents will also ensure its future delivery is cost effective and sustainable. It is therefore recommended that £20,000 is awarded from the Rural Delivery budget, as a contribution towards funding for a suitable organisation to support the set up of Village Agents in priority areas, as well as to support those parish and town councils that wish to continue to support an existing Village Agent or establish one in their area.

#### **5.4. Rural Communities Fund (£40,000 requested)**

The Rural Communities Fund, launched in June 2017, combined four existing grant schemes based on a need to improve the internal efficiency of delivering these grants, as well as to improve the experience for rural

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<sup>2</sup> Social Isolation and Loneliness in Hampshire – A Health Needs Assessment (2017)

communities seeking grant funding. The priorities of the scheme are to 'build community resilience and encourage self-help'. Applications are accepted to support three specific themes (retailers and community enterprises, community-led flood alleviation, countryside access), as well as general projects or initiatives supporting the scheme priorities.

The total grants budget for 2017/18 was £148,000, and in the first three quarters of the financial year, spend has totalled just over £66,000. Based on current interest in the scheme it is anticipated that there will be a minimum annual allocation of £88,000. This will leave a budget of approximately £60,000 to carry forward to 2018/19.

It is recommended that going forward the Rural Communities Fund should be aiming for a total allocation of £100,000 per year in grants. With more targeted working with parish and town councils planned, it is hoped that this will stimulate interest in the scheme and lead to an increase in applications. With this in mind it is recommended that £40,000 is awarded from the Rural Delivery budget to top up the Rural Communities Fund budget for 2018/19.

## **6. Rural Communities Fund grant application**

6.1. The Rural Communities Fund offers small grants to support Parish Councils, groups and organisations in rural Hampshire and small market towns. The overall priorities of the scheme are to build community resilience and encourage self-help. Applications are accepted to support one of four themes. Funding approval is sought for one application received under the retailers and community enterprises theme. The aim of this theme is to help them grow, increase their productivity and ultimately improve the services that are offered to communities in rural areas.

### **6.2. *Chilbolton Village Stores, £5,950 requested (grant reference 14848)***

Chilbolton Village Stores and Post Office is a traditional convenience store, also offering a small seating area for tea, coffee and cake. They currently offer some food to go services (pasties and sandwiches) however the catering facilities are limited and they would like to expand the provision of food to go, offer food to eat in and introduce a new tea room area. Funding is therefore requested to assist with works to provide a dedicated kitchen area and to help purchase kitchen equipment.

Funding is also being requested for a contribution towards awnings, to be installed on the outside of the shop to improve its external appearance and experience for customers. It is also proposed to install a roof light to allow more natural light into an otherwise dark area of the shop/tea room. This will contribute towards improved energy efficiency, ventilation, and refrigeration performance.

The proposed improvements have been well considered and have great potential to boost the shops economic performance. They also have the support of the local elected member and the Parish Council and a village survey conducted by the local shop action group, before it was purchased by the applicant, indicated that a tea room was one of the facilities that local people would like to see.

In addition to the improvements being considered as part of this application, the property is undergoing a full roof replacement, and is having new guttering, shop fascia and signage installed. This will all help improve the appearance of the shop and is being self-funded by the applicant. In total the applicant is committing around £12,000 and is seeking a grant of £6,100 from the Post Office Community Fund (decision expected February 2017).

In recognition of the benefits of the proposed improvements and the match funding being secured, it is recommended that the shortfall in funding is awarded (£5,950).

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	Yes

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rural Delivery Strategy: rural delivery funding	October 2017
Rural Delivery Strategy: rural delivery funding	July 2017
Rural Delivery Strategy: rural grants	June 2017
Rural Delivery Strategy: rural delivery funding	March 2017
Rural Delivery Strategy: rural delivery funding	April 2016
Hampshire County Council's Rural Delivery Strategy	March 2014

**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.)**

DocumentLocation

None



## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

- 1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

#### **Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:**

The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;

Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

The proposals are expected to have a high positive impact on people living in rural areas. No negative impacts are anticipated. Full equality impact assessments for the proposals in this report are available online: Hitting the Cold Spots and Village Agents – [www.hants.gov.uk/as-equality-ia-archive](http://www.hants.gov.uk/as-equality-ia-archive); Parish Lengthsman - [www.hants.gov.uk/equality/equality-impact-assessments/cx-pu-eqimpact-envi.htm](http://www.hants.gov.uk/equality/equality-impact-assessments/cx-pu-eqimpact-envi.htm).

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

More vibrant and active communities are likely to suffer less crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **3. Climate Change:**

How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? Supporting rural retailers encourages residents to shop locally thus reducing car use. The grant application supports measures to improve energy efficiency.

How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts? The proposals all support the culture of self-help and community resilience in rural areas.