

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
<b>Date:</b>	25 April 2019
<b>Title:</b>	Update on the Parish and Town Council Investment Fund and Associated Rural Issues
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

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#### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Executive Member for Policy and Resources on the progress of the Parish and Town Council Investment Fund and the Rural Communities Fund. The report highlights the importance of this initiative together with the County Council's long-term relationship with Parish and Town Councils.
2. The report also includes contextual information concerning Hampshire County Council's ongoing engagement with, and support for, rural communities including recommendations on the relationship with the Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC).
3. Approval is also sought to adjust current budget and policy accountabilities linked to changes in Executive Member roles and responsibilities, specifically to assist the Executive Member for Countryside and Rural Affairs (EMCRA) in the performance of his duties.

#### Recommendations

4. That the Executive Member for Policy and Resources:
  - i) welcomes and endorses progress made on the new Parish and Town Council Investment Fund together with the proposed direction of travel in approving live schemes;
  - ii) approves the proposed one-year grant payment extension of £57,000 to HALC, for the financial year 2019/20, and authorises the EMCRA to negotiate a subsequent 3 year agreement linked to a formal partnership relationship between both organisations;

- iii) confirms the role of the EMCRA in setting and reviewing the policy framework for the County farms estate, in light of his role, and that of the CCBS Department, in overseeing the management of those landholdings;
- iv) approves the adjustment of budget responsibility and accountability in support of the EMCRA role together with the flexibility necessary to allocate such budgets and resources in supporting the future direction identified in the report (as set out in the Finance section of this report).

## **Executive Summary**

- 5. The EMCRA leads on the County Council's approach to tackling challenges in the delivery of rural services and on the relationship with Parish and Town Councils (PTC's). This includes decision-making responsibility for both the Parish and Town Council (PTC) Investment Fund and Rural Communities Fund (RCF) together with the County Council's partnerships with the Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) and the Hampshire Rural Forum. The report updates members on progress in these areas and also proposals to simplify and re-enforce the ability of the EMCRA to take these initiatives forward.
- 6. The strong response to the PTC Investment Fund, launched in November 2018, is set out together with that of the County Council's Rural Communities Fund. Future direction will focus upon efforts to build local capacity and develop sustainable projects that meet local needs and respond to escalating pressures on County Council services. This builds upon the long standing and very positive relationship between Hampshire County Council and the PTCs which forms an important part of the local democratic context.
- 7. The report highlights the partnership with HALC, including its contribution to the PTC Investment Fund, and recommends further financial support for its role.
- 8. Suggested adjustments set out in the finance section of the report relate to the movement of budgets necessary to simplify and facilitate the EMCRA role in taking this work forward.

## **Contextual Information**

- 9. The EMCRA role established in 2018 leads on the County Council's approach to rural issues, the County Farm Estate and access to the countryside together with associated partnerships. Primary departmental links are with Culture, Communities and Business Services (CCBS), with service area responsibilities in Countryside (excluding Country Parks, Countryside Sites and Nature Reserves), Rural Affairs and Rights of Way. The EMCRA is also closely involved in oversight of the County Council's Farm Estate, which also forms part of CCBS. Functional duties include overall responsibility for the County Council's relationships with Parish, Town

and District and Borough Councils, including the partnership with HALC and the decision-making responsibilities for the new PTC Investment Fund, established in November 2018.

10. The PTC and HALC partnerships have facilitated several consultation activities and Roundtable meetings over the last 4 years; most recently the May 2018 Parish Council Event. The focus of that activity was to develop a collaborative and innovative approach to the growing pressures placed upon county council services at a local level. The outcomes of that process directly informed the development of the PTC Investment Fund.
11. This new Fund of £500,000 seeks to encourage innovation in response to growing pressures upon County Council Services by investing in locally led initiatives which help build local community capacity and resilience. A key focus lies in seeking sustainable solutions or approaches. PTCs offer a crucially important link to many communities at the most local level and play a pivotal role in supporting them. The County Council fully recognises the value of that role and continues to work closely and collaboratively with them.
12. In recognition of the value of the HALC partnership, the County Council has provided short and medium-term infrastructure grants of approximately £60,000 to £70,000 per year, the most recent agreement being £63,000 for the year 2018/19.
13. The Rural Affairs Development Fund directly supports delivery of the Rural Programme within CCBS. The annual commitments of £200,000 include investment and support to activities which specifically target issues identified in the County Council's Rural Priorities. (A list of these projects is attached in Appendix 1).
14. A significant annual commitment within the Rural Affairs Development Fund supports the Rural Communities Fund (RCF). This provides small grants and support for locally led initiatives amongst rural communities and continues to see a strong uptake with a typical year having 12 to 20 awards individually ranging from £1,000 to £15,000 and achieving match funding of 2 to 5 times the investment made.
15. External partnerships for the Rural Programme include those maintained through close connection to Hampshire's Rural Forum. With a current membership of 50 organisations, the Forum provides a diverse collective of stakeholder views and approaches on the challenges and opportunities in rural Hampshire.
16. Most recently, the evidence provided on the Rural Theme to the Commission of Enquiry, as part of a 2050 Vision, was collated with strong support from the Hampshire Rural Forum, alongside evidence and expert witnesses from regional partners and national experts. Outcomes of the Commission are expected to inform the future direction of the Rural Programme (see Sections on Performance and Future Direction).

## Finance

17. There are no new or increased financial commitments identified in this report. The PTC Investment Fund of £500,000 offers both capital and revenue investments to local councils and community groups of amounts usually up to £30,000. EMCRA approval is required on awards greater than £5,000, with support from the Rural and PTC Programme Board. Delegated officer authority for investments of less than £5,000 are in place for the Assistant Director for CCBS.
18. Established in November 2018, upwards of 25 projects are already in development with draws on funding expected in early 2019/20 (see Performance Sections 24 to 25).
19. The Rural Affairs Development Fund operates at £200,000 per year. This supported RCF awards for 2018/19 of £85,000, with more than fivefold match funding achieved. Increased uptake in the latter half of 2018/19 (attributed partly to wider promotion and simplification of the application process) set a trend which is expected to continue, with forecast awards for 2019/20 at £100,000 to £130,000.
20. Other significant commitments from the Rural Affairs Development Fund within 2018/19, and which are to be continued for 2019/20, include £35,000 investment in the Highways and Countryside Service Parish Lengthsmen Scheme, and £20,000 with Adults Service's 'Hitting the Cold Spots' programme – supporting vulnerable adults in rural communities.
21. Further grant funding for the year 2019/20 looks to support HALC in the continuation of their existing arrangements and in their commitment to support the delivery and promotion of the PTC Investment Fund. This 1 year period also provides opportunity to review the partnership direction and structure, with the possibility of a more stable, medium term 3 year arrangement. The HALC Policy and Resources annual grant has historically been £70,000 per year, but annual reductions of 10% were introduced from 2018 to reflect pressures on County Council Resources. This reduction was realised in the £63,000 grant awarded for 2018/19, and the £57,000 recommended for 2019/20.
22. Current governance of both the PTC Investment Fund and Rural Affairs Development Fund sit with Executive Decision making by EMCRA, with support from the Rural and Parish and Town Council Programme Board.
23. To facilitate the new EMCRA role, and associated decision-making processes, it is recommended that budget accountabilities and decision making are adjusted accordingly. This will include direct EMCRA responsibility for the allocation of both the Rural Affairs Development Fund together with the HALC infrastructure grant currently held under Policy and Resources. This would be ring fenced and held within CCBS budget responsibility to support the Executive Member in the performance of his duties.

## **Performance**

24. The PTC Investment Fund and RCF focus upon encouraging innovation and delivering measurable and sustainable outcomes at a local level.
25. Since its launch the PTC Fund has received 82 enquiries within its first quarter of operation, with 25 projects in development, involving a number of County Council Departments. (A summary of these projects is provided in Appendix 2). A further 20 to 25 applications were steered towards other existing County Council Grants and Funds, including the RCF and Recreation and Heritage Community Fund. The strong uptake is partially attributed to the pre-launch engagement (see section 10) and close partnership working with HALC, which informed the development of the process. The RCF also benefitted from the engagement activities and support partially enabled through the PTC Fund, realising an increased uptake during the latter half of 2018/19. Awards for £85,000 were given with over a five-fold match funding commitment (the highest percentages recorded to date).
26. Considering current trends, forecast awards for the RCF in 2019/20 are estimated at £100,000 to £130,000, with match funding (based upon a 5-year average) of 250 to 350%.
27. The Rural Programme supported the County Council's commitment to external partnership and consultation throughout 2018/19. The Programme actively participates on the Hampshire Rural Forum, which includes over 50 Stakeholder groups, continuing to provide valuable feedback on programme activities and initiatives.
28. Further developments in 2018/19 for the Forum included its additional role in taking on the Wessex Farming Group (advising DEFRA on rural issues in Hampshire and across the region). The Forum's Steering Group also participated in a Workshop to collate and provide evidence to the Rural Theme for the Hampshire 2050 Vision.
29. The collation of evidence for the Rural Theme as part of the Hampshire 2050 Vision provided further opportunity for stakeholder and partnership engagement, drawing upon both internal and external expertise to facilitate a well-received hearing for the Commission of Enquiry. New partnerships were established throughout the process with national experts from both academic and local government backgrounds. These combined with the Commission's feedback is expected to provide a strong platform for the Rural Programme to build upon.

## **Future Direction**

30. In recognition of shared outcomes between both organisations, the close County Council partnership with HALC is expected to continue. The PTC Investment Fund and RCF provide the financial means to develop new and innovative ways of working that address local needs and respond to increasing pressure on County Council services. Priority will be given to

projects that directly support such pressures in key areas and initiatives that draw in partnership and resources in a sustainable manner.

31. The financial infrastructure grant of £57,000 to HALC will support the ongoing partnership and provide a valuable period to develop and inform a future agreement linked to outcomes of the PTC Investment Fund.
32. Continued investments through the PTC Investment Fund and RCF will see tangible benefits in Hampshire's local communities. With both work streams expanding in reach and capacity and relying on significant levels of development and support for success, it will be necessary to commit to appropriate and proportionate levels of programme support and direct project management in future.
33. The work associated with the Rural Theme as part of the Hampshire 2050 Vision was effective in identifying the 'rural reality' within Hampshire, the drivers for change and what actions the County Council must consider in addressing rural issues in both the short, medium and long-term. The valuable evidence produced, and partnerships developed, will provide a platform upon which to build the direction for the Rural Programme. There will be follow up Rural Forum workshops and stakeholder consultation to develop and expand the County Councils approach through and beyond 2019/20.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND 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>
EMPR Report - Town and Parish Council Investment Fund	26.09.2018
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

**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

**EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

**1. Equality Duty**

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 by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) 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 protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are 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 in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. The EIA can be seen below.



# Equality Impact Assessment



Hampshire  
County Council

## Rural Affairs and Parish and Town Councils – update and the development of the Parish and Town Council Partnerships and Rural Programme

Accountable officer: sam jones

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Department: Culture, Communities and Business Services

Date of assessment: 05/03/2019

### Description of current service/policy

Parish and Town Council Partnership, including:

- Direct partnership with HALC, with annual financial support (to date ranging from £70-63k)
- New Parish and Town Council Investment Fund. Value of £500k, looking to invest in innovative local solutions which build local capacity and resilience.

Rural Programme - CCBS:

- Support and the development of awareness and effectiveness of services to our rural communities
- Includes Rural Community Fund which provides financial support to locally led initiatives which build local capacity and resilience

Geographical impact: All  
Hampshire

### Description of proposed change

Infrastructure support Grant to HALC from Policy and Resources of £57k to support their work programme through 2019/20.

note. 10% annual reduction from the £63k and £70k awarded in 2018/19 and 2017/18 respectively to reflect the pressures on County Council resources.

Movement of the Rural Affairs budget from Policy and Resources to CCBS to reflect the decision making responsibilities of the Executive Member for Countryside and Rural Affairs (established

2018/19) and Departmental delivery responsibilities within CCBS for both the Rural Programme and Parish and Town Council Partnership.

## Impacts of the proposed change

This impact assessment covers Service users

## Engagement and consultation

Has engagement or consultation been carried out? Yes

Continuing engagement with HALC to ensure agreement and clarity of programmes and goals in providing support to local councils and communities.

Close working relationship with Hampshire's Rural Forum to inform direction and goals of the Rural Programme meet the needs of our rural communities.

Further feedback expected shortly from the Commission of Enquiry as part of the 2050 Vision - Rural Strategic Theme

Statutory considerations	Impact	Mitigation
<b>Age:</b> Positive	Both the Rural and Parish & Town Council Funds look to invest in local initiatives which help meet the needs of vulnerable members of the community of all ages, including the growing elderly contingent.	
<b>Disability:</b> Positive	Both the Rural and Parish & Town Council Funds look to invest in local initiatives which help meet the needs of disabled members of the community.	
<b>Sexual orientation:</b> Neutral		

## Integral Appendix B

<b>Race:</b> Neutral		
<b>Religion and belief:</b> Neutral		
<b>Gender reassignment:</b> Neutral		
<b>Gender:</b> Neutral		
<b>Marriage and civil partnership:</b> Neutral		
<b>Pregnancy and maternity:</b> Positive	Both the Rural and Parish & Town Council Funds look to invest in local initiatives which help meet the needs of vulnerable members of the community, including pregnant women and young families. Examples include community hubs, educational classes and subsidised childcare.	
<b>Other policy considerations</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>

<p><b>Poverty:</b> Positive</p>	<p>Both the Rural Programme and Parish &amp; Town Council Fund look to invest in local initiatives which help meet the needs in areas of deprivation. Examples include support to 'Hitting the Cold Spots' providing new heating and insulation and subsidised childcare initiatives for poorer members of the community.</p>	
<p><b>Rurality:</b> Positive</p>	<p>The Parish &amp; Town Council Funds provide support to locally led initiatives across the whole of Hampshire, including rural areas.</p> <p>The Rural Programme and associated Rural Communities Fund specifically engages with, builds awareness of and support to the specific needs of our rural communities.</p>	

**Neutrality statement (if all considerations have a neutral impact)**

**Any other information**

n/a

## APPENDIX 1

### Rural Affairs Development Fund – Main Financial Commitments 2018/19

1. The Rural Affairs Development Fund directly supports delivery of the Rural Programme within CCBS. The annual commitments of £200,000 include investment and support to activities which specifically target issues identified in the County Council's Rural Priorities.

Activity/Project	Service Area	Brief Activity/Project Summary	Value Awarded (£'s)
Rural Communities Fund	Cross-Departmental	This provides small grants and support for locally led initiatives amongst rural communities and continues to see a strong uptake; 2018/19 awarding 17 projects individual support ranging from £1,000 to £15,000 and achieving match funding of 2 to 5 times the investment made.	85, 000
Parish Lengthsmen Scheme	Highways and Countryside Service	Providing resources to build local capacity amongst Parishes in managing minor works upon the Highway and Rights of Way network. Approx. 180 Parishes currently signed up to the scheme.	35, 000
Hitting the Cold Spots	Adult Services – Demand Management & Prevention	Programme supporting vulnerable adults, providing improvements to their heating and insulation in homes. Investments matched by private sector utility providers.	20, 000
Village Agents	Adult Services – Demand Management & Prevention	Partnership Programme with Age Concern which supports and trains local volunteers (Village Agents) to provide local care in their communities. 2018/19 activity: 51 Village Agents who enabled 265 1:1 individual sessions and 21 community events.	20, 000
HCC Fly-Tipping Campaign	ETE and Trading Standards	Fly tipping is estimated to cost £850million per year on public land in Hampshire/year. Investment covers costs of cameras and signage for pilot a CCTV programme on HCC Countryside Sites.	4, 000
Rural Service Network - Subscriptions	HCC and Parish and Town Councils	Annual subscription costs for HCC and rural Parish and Town Councils, providing access to information and a partnership network through a lead national organisation.	3, 000

## APPENDIX 2

### Parish and Town Council Investment Fund - Summary of Active Projects

1. Since its launch the PTC Fund has received 82 enquiries within its first quarter of operation, with 25 projects in active development involving several County Council Departments. A further 20 to 25 applications were steered towards other existing County Council Grants and Funds, including the RCF and Recreation and Heritage Community Fund.

Service Area Supported	Number of Applications in Development	Brief Summaries of Projects (where available)	Approximate Values of Investments Sought (£'s)
Adults Services	11	Projects focus on Demand Management and Prevention, providing local training, equipment and facilities within communities.	44, 000
Children's Services	1	Activity programme for Assisted Learning	5, 000
Countryside Service	6	Local Partnership's between Parish and Town Councils and the Countryside Service, with investments providing equipment and training to increase local capacity in managing green spaces and rights of way. Significant match funded available in pilot areas through Sc106 and CIL funding held by the local partners	40, 000
Fly Tipping	2	Expansion on the existing HCC CCTV Pilot Programme, to include community owned/managed sites, enabling more comprehensive geographical coverage in fly tipping hot spot areas	4, 000
Highways	3	Wide range of projects in early development, including equipment and training.	10 to 25, 000
Sustainable Transport	1	Local infrastructure to encourage more sustainable transport choices amongst community members for local travel	tbc