



1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1. To inform members of the background to, and introduction of, the proposed rural strategy for the Borough.

2.0. RECOMMENDATION

2.1. To endorse, and formally adopt the proposed rural strategy.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

3.1. Historically, on an annual basis, the rural affairs lead member has presented a rural areas review report to members. The primary purpose of the report was to present a comprehensive account of service delivery specifically within the rural areas of the Borough, detailed against each of the authority's corporate plan priorities.

3.1.1. However, following the appointment of the new administration in May 2015, it was agreed that we should seek to clarify and profile specific priorities in supporting the needs of our rural Borough.

3.1.2. Subsequently, an inaugural rural conference took place on 1st December 2015, chaired by Cllr Kevin Morrell, our lead member for rural affairs. The event attracted 80 delegates representing the rural parishes of the Borough, along with key partners including Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Police, the Rural Communities Council, as well as business representatives.

3.1.3. The event focussed on the key challenges and priorities for our rural localities, including: access to services and facilities; rural housing delivery; community safety; countryside & environment protection; and economy & enterprise. However, importantly there was space for discussion and collective agreement, on what partners felt they could commit to in bringing about year on year improvement.

3.2. Scope of the Strategy

3.2.1. The outcomes arising from the rural conference, coupled with evidence gathered from the ongoing (twice yearly) Parish Forum meetings, has informed the proposed rural strategy.

3.2.2. The strategy sets out the overall purpose and vision for our rural Borough, as well as the high level priorities, namely: access to services and facilities; facilitation of transport solutions; promoting neighbourhood planning; rural housing delivery; countryside protection & enhancements; economy, enterprise & tourism, and community safety & action.

3.3. Delivering the Strategy

3.3.1. The high level priorities set out in the strategy are underpinned by key actions, which will inform an annual rural work programme. The work programme will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, and specifically at the bi monthly rural lead member and officer review

meetings, at the Parish Forum meetings (now increased to take place 3 times per year), with overall progress reported at an Autumn annual rural conference.

- 3.3.2. Outcomes arising from the rural conference will inform the work plan for the following year, so that the strategy remains a working document, and updated accordingly on an annual basis.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (IB)

- 4.1 Costs associated with adopting the strategy will be met from existing budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (MR)

- 5.1. None arising directly from the report

6. CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The contents of the report relate to and support the following strategic aims:

- Cleaner and Greener Neighbourhoods
- Thriving Economy
- Safer and Healthier Borough
- Strong and distinctive communities

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1. The strategy has been informed by rural Parishes and key partners on behalf of the Borough's rural communities, through the Borough's inaugural rural conference.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1.

Management of significant (Net Red) Risks		
Risk Description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Lack of focus and subsequent alignment of resources to support rural priorities	Agreed rural priorities and supporting delivery plans informed through an annually reviewed strategy	Edwina Grant

9. KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The ongoing Parish Forum events, at which all Parish Councils have opportunity to be represented, informs the key challenges and priorities for our rural communities. The inaugural rural conference sought to consolidate this evidence, to inform the rural strategy and underpinning actions. The proposed approach will ensure resources are aligned with the Borough's rural priorities.

10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The contents of the report relate to and support the following strategic aims:

- Cleaner and Greener Neighbourhoods
- Thriving Economy
- Safer and Healthier Borough
- Strong and distinctive communities

- 10.2. By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community Safety implications
- Environmental implications

- ICT implications
- Asset Management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human Resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data Protection implications
- Voluntary Sector

Background papers: None

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