

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee** Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Committee** 18th October 2005

**Report Title** Rural Policy and Rural Services

**Summary** This Committee at its meeting on 23rd June 2005 identified farm diversification, business support, public transport and access to health and other services as key rural service delivery issues to be addressed. A panel of officers will lead the Committee in a discussion of these issues.

**For further information please contact** John Ridgley  
Regeneration Projects Manager  
Tel. 01926 412072  
johnridgley@warwickshire.gov.uk

**Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?** YES/No

**Background Papers** None

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-** *Details to be specified*

- Other Committees  Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee 23rd June 2005.
- Local Member(s)  .....  
(With brief comments, if appropriate)
- Other Elected Members  Councillor F P Barnes } for information  
Councillor M J Jones }  
Councillor R P L Morris-Jones }
- Cabinet Member  Councillor C J Saint – for information  
(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)
- Chief Executive
- Legal  I Marriott – Comments incorporated

- Finance  .....
- Other Chief Officers  P Rhodes – Property Services
- District Councils  .....
- Health Authority  .....
- Police  .....
- Other Bodies/Individuals  .....

**FINAL DECISION**                      **YES/NO**      *(If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps)*

**SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :**

*Details to be specified*

- Further consideration by this Committee  .....
- To Council  .....
- To Cabinet  The Committee may wish to make recommendations to Cabinet at a future date on the policy for these services or the management of their delivery.
- To an O & S Committee  If the Committee wish to explore any of the issues in more depth, for some it may be useful to do this with representatives from the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- To an Area Committee  .....
- Further Consultation  .....

**Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee –  
18th October 2005**

**Rural Policy and Rural Services**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and  
Economic Strategy**

**Recommendation**

Having heard the presentations and discussion the Committee is asked to agree a way forward either through the preparation of action plans for identified topics or a report to Cabinet.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At your meeting on 23rd June 2005 you considered a report listing the County Council policies covering rural areas, describing the services delivered by the County Council in rural areas and identifying priorities and opportunities for policy development and improved service delivery. You identified farm diversification, business support, public transport, and access to health and other services as key rural service delivery issues to be addressed.
- 1.2 To facilitate a discussion of these issues four County Council officers with particular responsibilities for the services identified have been invited to make brief presentations to the Committee. The presentations will be preceded by selected statistical information. Following the presentations the five speakers will form a panel to answer Members' questions during the discussion. John Scouller, Head of Social and Economic Regeneration in Planning Transport and Economic Strategy (PTES) will chair the panel. A brief précis of each speaker's presentation is attached as **Appendix A**.

**2. The Programme**

**Introduction**

- (i) Rural Facts and Figures - Paul Seamer - PTES Research Unit

**The Issues**

- (i) Farm Diversification - Charlotte Cox - Property Services - Rural Estates  
(ii) Rural Business Support - Roy Shearing - PTES - Economic Development  
(iii) Rural Public Transport - Kevin McGovern - PTES - Transport Operations

- (iv) Access to Services - John Lyons - Chief Executive's - Community Development

## **Discussion**

The Committee may like to consider these issues:-

- (i) Should the County Council develop further projects and programmes to support farming, farm diversification and businesses in rural areas?
- (ii) The support we are able to give vital rural services provided commercially such as village shops and post offices, and those provided voluntarily or by social enterprises such as village halls, is limited. Should we do more?
- (iii) How do we sustain needed public transport services and community transport initiatives in the face of relatively low usage and limited and varying public funding?
- (iv) How can we make sure that public services reach those in the smaller pockets of need or in individual isolation in rural areas?

## **Summing up by Chair and Any Recommendations**

### **3. Next Steps**

- 3.1 If, as a result of the discussion of these issues, it is felt that there is a need to adjust County Council policy for any of these rural services or the way they are delivered, the Committee can ask the Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy to prepare a further report putting forward a programme of action. It may be beneficial for this programme of action to be considered more widely across the Council through a seminar for Members of both the Economic Development and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

JOHN DEEGAN  
Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy  
Shire Hall  
Warwick

4th October 2005

**Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee –  
18th October 2005**

**Rural Policy and Rural Services**

Presentation on 18th October 2005

**Precis on Farm Diversification Topic  
Charlotte Cox – Assistant Land Agent, Property Services**

My talk will be split into 2 parts – background into what is *farm diversification* and why more farmers are considering this option and the second, on the opportunities and grant schemes available to assist with *farm diversification* on holdings.

**PART 1:**

**What is *Farm Diversification*?**

In simple terms, *farm diversification* is “**creating an income, full or part time, outside the main farm business**”. It is the establishment of a new enterprise on a farm, which may or may not be directly related to agriculture but supplements the farmers’ primary income. Some may have assets on their farm that are under utilised that can be identified and turned into an alternative income source.

**Why *Farm Diversification*?**

With falling farm incomes coupled with EU and UK legislative pressures, farmers are looking to diversify into non-farming activities to boost their incomes whilst utilising assets, which would otherwise become redundant.

**PART 2:**

**Opportunities and Grant Schemes:**

Opportunities are available for a wide variety of businesses from farm shops through to the growing of crops for alternative energy sources. Associated with these opportunities is the ability to apply for grant aid to assist with the development costs of the ‘*diversified*’ project.

Grant schemes are available in two forms – land based and project based. Examples of each include:-

- (i) Land based – Environmental Stewardship, Energy Crop Schemes, England Woodland Grant Scheme.
- (ii) Project based – Processing and Marketing Grant, Rural Enterprise Scheme, Vocational Training Scheme.

## **Presentation on 18th October 2005**

### **Precis on Business Support to Rural Businesses Roy Shearing - Principal Officer - Business Support Services Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy**

My brief presentation will cover three aspects of business support to rural enterprises; commenting on the wide range of market sectors and types of business, the range of services available from the County Economic Development Group and the way we work in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of clients in the rural areas. This will raise the question of our future strategy in supporting rural enterprises as budgets come under increasing pressures.

1. Rural Businesses and Employment in Warwickshire.
  - a. There is a rural workforce of 80,000 + people spread across 9,600 workplaces in 66 "rural" wards.
  - b. Manufacturing is the largest employment sector, employing 10,000 people. Hotels and restaurants make up 11% of employment and agriculture 7%.
  - c. Higher levels of self employment is a feature of rural employment compared to urban areas (16.6% of those aged 16-74 compared to 10.4% in urban areas).
2. Our team of Business Support Officers can provide information and advice on a number of issues including:-
  - a. Advice and access to training on start up.
  - b. Ongoing mentoring.
  - c. Specialist advice in environmental issues, ICT, access to finance including seminars on various topics.
  - d. Specific training on web marketing under the WIRED project.
3. Partnership
  - a. Our main partnership activity is with the Rural Forum (and business led Warwickshire Hub). This has been a successful example of best practice in wider partnership working. Projects have included the Stimulating Rural Enterprise programme, which has resulted in over £1m of grant being secured by diversifying rural enterprises.
  - b. The Vital Villages programme, in partnership with Worcestershire, ended in March 2005. Warwickshire rural local authorities are maintaining the

link with Warwickshire Rural Community Council to ensure village shops and other enterprises continue to receive some support.

- c. The Promoting Inclusion and Enterprise (PIE) programme, which has also brought focused support to rural businesses in South Warwickshire, ends in March 2006.

Issues that are being considered for the future include; how we should support the growth in social enterprises in rural areas, the role of Business Link in funding support outside of the Regeneration Zone, increasing regionalisation of support programmes and how rural support should be prioritised when budgets are under pressure.

## **Roy Shearing**

**Rural Public Transport in Warwickshire**  
**Kevin McGovern - Transport Operations Manager**  
**Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy**

1. Warwickshire County Council places a high value on the benefits of public transport, both for passengers, and in order to meet the transport objectives of the Government and the County Council. This is reflected in the increased level of financial resources committed to increasing and enhancing the public transport network in Warwickshire in recent years.
2. The commitment to rural public transport in Warwickshire is reflected in the way in which the public transport budget is spent. Around 75% of the total budget is used to provide access to health, leisure, training, educational and shopping facilities for people in rurally isolated areas.
3. Rural bus services can provide the best solutions to the connected challenges of dealing with social exclusion, improving transport choice and reducing use of the car, and supporting the local economy. However, it is not without difficulties. A dispersed population, the need for long distance travel, diverse journey patterns, high car ownership and rising costs often make rural bus services difficult to sustain.
4. The County Council aims to secure a minimum level of public transport provision throughout rural areas. This is presently governed by levels of population in rural communities but in line with the Public Transport Strategy, we are moving towards other factors such as levels of car ownership and access to bus stops. Levels of service ranges from a weekly shopping services in very small areas to daily, evening and Sunday services in communities of up to 10,000.
5. Whilst conventional bus services provide a vital role in rural areas they do not always meet the needs of local people. The most effective option, or mix of options used to provides essential links should include conventional bus and rail services, voluntary and community transport schemes, flexible transport services, demand responsive systems. Several of these operate in Warwickshire including:-
  - (i) Flexibus – A flexible bus service which offers a number of features for mobility impaired passengers.
  - (ii) Back and 4th – A demand responsive community transport scheme in South Warwickshire.
  - (iii) Busterwerkenbak – A demand responsive service to employment opportunities for people in North Warwickshire.
  - (iv) Racing To Get There – A demand responsive community transport scheme in Warwick District.

KM16/09/05



## **Precis on Access to Services**

**John Lyons – Community Development Co-ordinator,  
Chief Executive's Department**

The Council's social inclusion strategy seeks to address the needs of individuals or areas that are unable to benefit from the quality of life being experienced by others in the community because of:-

- ❑ Linked problems - such as unemployment, low income, poor housing, high crime, poor environment, bad health or family breakdown.
- ❑ Personal difficulties - such as disability, old age, lack of education, poor English language skills, prejudice or discrimination.
- ❑ Unfavourable situations - such as cultural or rural isolation.

The Strategy supports the Council's six corporate objectives, but is focused on achieving the following key aims:-

- ❑ Improvement for all.
- ❑ Fastest improvement for the most deprived.
- ❑ Better access to services for everyone.

The Strategy aims to identify overall and differential progress and to focus on narrowing or removing disparities. Work is grouped within two main categories:-

- ❑ Making Communities More Active, so they can help themselves.
- ❑ Promoting inclusively within the County Council, as an employer and in service delivery.

The Strategy focuses on a number of inter-related themes, and actions flow from these:-

- ❑ Promoting Community Cohesion
- ❑ Anti Poverty Work
- ❑ Achieving Equality
- ❑ Improving Public Health
- ❑ Reducing Crime and Promoting Community Safety
- ❑ Young People
- ❑ Older People
- ❑ Local Initiatives
- ❑ Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector

In relation to the needs of people living in rural areas the Strategy recognises that:-

- ❑ Warwickshire is generally a prosperous place, but the overall picture hides differences between areas, affecting both rural and urban parts.

- ❑ The needs of rural areas sometimes get overlooked because of smaller pockets of need or individual isolation.
- ❑ There are significant changes in the population profile, with a huge increase in the elderly population and a decrease in the number of young people.
- ❑ People's needs vary according to age, circumstances and resources.
- ❑ The population is also becoming more diverse, with a growing number of people from different ethnic minorities. They have less access to organised support in the rural areas.
- ❑ Full inclusion and equality for everyone is not the normal reality. We need to redress existing imbalances.
- ❑ There is a general tendency towards specialisation and rationalisation of services which has reduced traditional local services – ways need to be found to address this.
- ❑ We need to work in partnership with other public bodies and the voluntary and community sector.