

**Proposed Urgent Decision  
to be taken by the Deputy Leader  
on or after 28 June 2013**

**Application for LEADER Transitional Funding**

**Recommendations**

That the Deputy Leader:

- 1) Approves the funding application being submitted to Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for £30,000 to £40,000; and
- 2) Approves that the County Council continues as the Accountable Body for this funding until the end of the financial year 2014/15, if it were to be successful.

**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The current LEADER programme is part of the 2007-2013 European RDPE (Rural Development Programme for England) programme and is 50% funded through European funding and 50% through Defra.
- 1.2 The Central Warwickshire LEADER programme is delivered by Garden Organic at Ryton-on-Dunsmore with WCC as the Accountable Body. The contract between Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and AWM (and subsequently Defra) was signed in September 2009. The current end date of the programme is March 2014.
- 1.3 The programme has an overarching scope of social cohesion against three themes: community growing; community arts; and linking the community to land based rural industries. These were decided after an extensive consultation period with the public through events and online collaboration. The LEADER ethos is very much one of “bottom-up” development with significant community buy-in a pre-requisite to project approval.
- 1.4 In terms of definition, Central Warwickshire is defined as Rugby and Warwick rural areas (but not urban areas). North Warwickshire Borough Council has a separate programme that they administer.
- 1.5 During the course of the last three years, about 175 different projects have been delivered by the programme across almost all the villages of Central Warwickshire at a project cost of about £4,500 per project. We have been able to do this through contracting organisations to deliver a number of smaller projects. Examples of our projects are below:

- Live and Local had two projects. County Arts delivered community-led projects including the mural work at the Ryton A45 underpass. They have also had a Rural Cinema network taking films into village halls.
- Community Orchards – 24 separate orchards have been created in schools and villages over the last three years. These include contributions towards benches, fences and fruit presses for juicing. The benefit of this project will be seen for generations to come.
- Festival of the Harvest – this takes place every autumn at the Show ground at Stoneleigh. It involves bringing primary school children (Years 6 and 7) in touch with their rural heritage. It has been supported by a number of local farmers over the years and is hosted by Warwickshire Rural Hub.
- Upgrades to village halls – a number of groups using halls have benefitted from functional upgrades to their halls for lighting, stage, sound, theatrical curtains etc. These include Lapworth, Shrewley, Cubbington, Pailton and Churchover.

## **2.0 Key issues**

- 2.1 Rural areas traditionally have always struggled to attract the same level of funding as urban areas.
- 2.2 Defra is now considering a future programme and is currently looking to put transitional funding in place from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 so that current expertise is not lost.
- 2.3 All LAGs (Local Action Groups that administer LEADER funds) in England have been asked to put forward an application for this funding which could be between £30,000 and £40,000. WCC, as the current Accountable Body, has been asked by the LAG to support this application.
- 2.4 The Central Warwickshire LAG is comprised of the two partners – Garden Organic and WCC – as well as representatives from the private sector with an interest in our themes, independent members and other public sector representatives, such as Defra.
- 2.5 If successful the funding will be used to evaluate delivery of the current programme, set new priorities, and consult with businesses and local communities including the LEP, as a precursor to a new 2014-2020 programme.
- 2.6 WCC is not at this time being asked to be Accountable Body beyond 2015 but to see the current programme and transitional funding process through to the end of the financial year 2014/15.

- 2.7 WCC will wish to consider, probably later this year, its future role with LEADER once a 2014-2020 programme has been confirmed. It is likely that a report will be brought to Cabinet in the autumn.
- 2.8 The European funding programme for 2014-2020 will have an even greater focus on growth. This will mean a change in approach for LEADER and it is important for our rural areas that this is picked up within the LEP agenda through the LEADER programme.
- 2.9 Defra want to extend the coverage of the LEADER programme across all of rural England. There are issues with this though, as there will not be any additional funding made available. Potentially, the funding will be spread more thinly unless, for example, ESF funds could be drawn down for, say, training purposes or cash match can be found from the private sector.
- 2.10 LEADER funding has been part of the European programme for over 20 years delivering community-led “bottom-up” programmes. It is delivered through the Rural Development Programme for England with Defra contributing 50% and European funding the other 50%.

### **3.0 Options Proposal**

- 3.1 Option 1 – do nothing. This would restrict the current Central Warwickshire LEADER programme in accessing transitional funding and is not recommended.
- 3.2 Option 2 – allow another Council to take on the role of Accountable Body. Whilst this may need to be considered if we reach a position of wishing to draw up an application for a new programme in 2014-2020, only current LAGs are being invited to apply for transitional funding at this stage. There is nothing to be gained from WCC giving up its Accountable Body status at this time and no risk to WCC maintaining this status in overseeing the transitional funding
- 3.3 Option 3 – WCC maintains its Accountable Body role until the end of the current programme and transitional period (31<sup>st</sup> March 2015). Transitional funding asks for no more than matched time to be contributed to the application. The administrative burden falling on WCC during this period will be minimal. The officer match time is required to help take the key activities forward in the transitional year. These include reviewing the previous programme; assessing the governance of the LAG going forward; building relationships with LEPs, all borough and district councils and the community and business sectors; preparatory work for a new strategy. Much of the work will be continued by the Programme Manager at Garden Organic and this time forms a large part of the costs included in the application for transitional funding.
- 3.4 It is recommended that the proposal in 3.3 is approved and that WCC agree to act as Accountable Body until the end of the transitional period.

#### **4.0 Timescales associated with the decision / next steps**

- 4.1 The final deadline for submitting the application to Defra is Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2013, although they have asked for them sooner so that decisions can be made and funds allocated. Approval by the Deputy Leader is all that is required for this report.
- 4.2 If successful, the funding would be in place to use from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

#### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers to this report.

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