



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

A656

Cabinet 28 April 2010

Recommendation from Rural Area Working Party: 15 April 2010 (May10/11)

Cabinet Member: Cllr John Griffiths

*Working Party Chairman:
Cllr Jim Thorndyke*

**1. Affordable Housing in the Rural Areas: Rural Housing Needs Surveys
(Report A624)**

RECOMMENDED:-

That the Cabinet consider whether there are means within available resources towards adopting a more systematic approach to providing rural housing needs surveys on a three yearly cycle as part of the budget and service planning process for 2011/2012, including investigating sources of external funding for this work.

As part of its current Work Programme the Rural Area Working Party had been asked by Cabinet to examine rural housing need and delivery issues and to seek to attract additional external funding.

The Working Party considered Report A624 which provided an overview of the delivery of affordable housing in rural communities in a national and local context, and outlined progress, with examples, on the delivery of affordable houses in the rural area of the Borough.

Section 8 of the Report focussed on the provision of affordable housing through rural exception sites via partnerships between Parish Councils, the Borough Council and Housing Associations with grant aid from the Homes and Community Agency. An essential prerequisite for such a scheme was that it was based on an established local housing need which was ascertained by a housing needs survey initiated by the Parish Council assisted by the Rural Housing Enabler of Suffolk ACRE (Action for Communities in Rural England).

Appendix A of the Report provided information on situation on the completion of housing needs surveys by parish in the rural area of the Borough. This indicated that in 'infill villages' there had been only 2 surveys completed during the last 3 years out of a total of 26 parishes. There were difficulties, however, in providing resources to enable this work to be progressed on a systematic basis, dependent as it was on voluntary support from Parish Councils and in view of the situation that the Rural Housing Enabler of Suffolk ACRE was also required to cover other rural parts of the county.

On 2 December 2009 the Cabinet had signed up to the National Housing Federation's 'Save Our Villages Campaign' which asked local authorities to commit themselves to carrying out housing needs assessments and development action plans to ensure that such needs were being identified and met.

The Working Party noted the partial progress in completing housing needs survey for rural parishes in the Borough, and acknowledged that the lack of additional resources was inhibiting a more systematic approach being adopted. It was of the view that whilst the completion of up to date surveys for all parishes was highly desirable a proposal for more resources would be subject to constraints imposed on the Council's finances.

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