



Cabinet 20 July 2011

Recommendations from Rural Area Working Party: 15 June 2011 (Aug11/04)

*Cabinet Member: Cllr John Griffiths Chairman of the Working Party:
Cllr Jim Thorndyke*

1. Terms of Reference

RECOMMENDED:-

That, the Terms of Reference, contained in agenda item 7 of the Rural Area Working Party agenda dated 15 June 2011 be approved, subject to paragraph (c) being amended to read:-

'consider service related and other issues which relate specifically to the rural area and to liaise with parish councils and other partners through the parish conference and other appropriate means, as appropriate.'

On 25 May 2011, the Cabinet reviewed its Working Parties and other Groups, including membership and Terms of Reference. Arising from that meeting, each Working Party have been requested to review, and amend where necessary, their Terms of Reference.

During the discussion the Working Party considered it advisable that the manner in which parish councils are contacted be defined and refer to the parish conference.

2. Rural Bus Cuts: Identify Practical Solutions

RECOMMENDED:- That,

- (1) the Borough Council work with the County Council and bus operators to promote existing rural bus services and community transport, including:-**
 - (a) publicising existing bus timetables and demand responsive services to customers through its website, offices, publications and internal bulletins;**
 - (b) offering practical assistance to communities wishing to use the County Council's new toolkit for community transport;**

- (c) *targeting the Borough Council's own limited rural funding at promotion, facilitation and coordination of rural transport schemes rather than direct delivery;*
 - (d) *raising awareness amongst borough and parish councillors through the Members' Bulletin, Rural News, Parish Conference and future Vision 2031 consultation events; and*
 - (e) *targeting any Rural Initiatives Grants Scheme funding for rural transport at promotion and coordination, rather than direct delivery; and*
- (2) *recognising the existing challenges faced by rural communities, and the long-term pressures which will be caused by fuel scarcity/prices and an ageing population, the new Rural Vision 2031 include short and long-term actions to improve rural transport and accessibility to services, along the following lines:-*
- (a) *focusing timetabled bus services on main routes only, where they are viable and sustainable;*
 - (b) *extending the 'reach' of these bus services (geographically and time-wise) by making better use of demand responsive transport services and by encouraging new kinds of transport schemes (led by communities, social enterprises, schools/colleges, supermarkets, etc); and*
 - (c) *looking at ways in which services can be brought out to rural communities, to minimise the need for travel, looking at current good practice (e.g. the collection/delivery of prescriptions) and the opportunities provided by new technologies and faster broadband.*

Representatives from Suffolk County Council, bus operators and other stakeholders attended the meeting and discussed the issue of rural bus cuts and identified practical solutions.