



Cabinet 28 March 2012

Recommendations from the Rural Area Working Party: 14 March 2012 (Apr12/06)

Cabinet Member:
Cllr John Griffiths

Chairman of the Working Party:
Cllr Jim Thorndyke

1. Rural Profiling Project (Report C394)

RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) the draft project brief, as contained in Appendix A to Report C394, be approved subject to the amendment of Section 5.3 of the first bullet point in the second paragraph to read 'focus groups to help develop understanding of aspirations and fit with national/local policies'; and**
- (2) agreement be given for a pilot scheme to be implemented which will be funded from the £10,000 already approved for carrying out housing needs survey work.**

Report C394 was submitted the background to which was that in April 2010, the Working Party had recommended that a more systematic approach be adopted within available resources to providing rural housing needs surveys on a three yearly cycle as part of the budget and service planning process for 2011/2012. Cabinet had subsequently approved an annual sum of £10,000 for this work.

The report stated that since that time there had been developments which would influence the delivery of affordable housing, these were:-

- (a) the Localism Act 2011, which meant that decisions about housing were to be taken locally;
- (b) changes in the way new affordable housing was to be funded, introduced by the Homes and Community Agency (HCA). Registered providers were now required to set out their bids for new houses in a four year programme and not as schemes progressed as previously; and
- (c) Suffolk County Council had begun to introduce a 'Flexicare' policy aimed at keeping people independent and living in their own home for as long as possible.

The report drew attention to the need to review how local housing needs surveys were carried out. It, therefore, proposed that a pilot project be developed which would involve a different approach, whereby survey work sought to provide broader information regarding the village to help shape future housing supply and ensure appropriate support services were developed too. The draft project brief was attached as Appendix A. If the pilot project was agreed it was suggested that Ixworth and surrounding villages might be a suitable area in which to carry out the pilot project with an interim report on progress being made to the Working Party at its meeting on 14 June 2012, and a final report being submitted, tentatively, to the Working Party's meeting on 8 November 2012.

In discussing the report the Working Party felt that there was some overemphasis on involving and provision for older people, and the terms of reference for the pilot project should be broader based so as to include all sections of the community. It was accepted that work on any Neighbourhood Plans being developed by Parish Councils would be dovetailed with work on the pilot project, and that it would be appropriate for an elected member to serve on the Pilot Project Steering Group.

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