



Rural Area Working Party 12 November 2009

Terms of Reference and Provisional Work Programme

1. Terms of Reference

1.1 The agreed terms of reference for the Working Party are as follows:-

- (a) maintain an overview of the issues relating to the wellbeing, economic prosperity and future development of the rural area of St Edmundsbury and to make recommendations to the Cabinet about actions required to promote its success;
- (b) oversee the development and monitor the implementation of the Council's Rural Action Plan (and any replacement) and to make recommendations to the Cabinet accordingly;
- (c) consider service related and other issues which relate specifically to the rural area and to liaise with parish councils and other partners as appropriate;
- (d) appoint steering groups for any issue within the remit of the Working Party, and to co-opt non-voting members to these steering groups in order to provide alternative viewpoints and expert advice; and
- (e) invite interested parties to meetings as considered appropriate.

1.2. The Cabinet, in setting up the Working Party, envisaged that it would perform a similar role on its behalf as the two urban working parties, namely to oversee any issues which have a specific impact on the rural area and advise it accordingly. In keeping with the working parties for the two towns, there is no intention to duplicate the work of the Sustainable Development Panel or the Grant Panel, although there may be occasion when those existing bodies will want the advice of the Working Party.

1.3. As with the scrutiny work programmes there is also a need to have regard to the constraints on officer and member capacity when agreeing work programmes.

1.4. One specific role for the new Working Party is to take on the monitoring and development role performed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Rural Action Plan. This will allow what is now only an annual exercise to have a higher profile. Indeed, one of the main tasks of the Panel will be to raise the profile of rural issues locally, regionally and nationally.

1.5. The Cabinet also identified that the Working Party might want, initially, to look at opportunities to focus on the rural aspects of housing, economic development, deprivation, accessibility to services, the built and natural environment and the new 'neighbourhoods' agenda, which is often harder to apply in rural areas. The Panel will want to work with partners, notably parish councils, and another key role could be to seek external funding for rural initiatives.

- 1.6. Portfolio Holders have also asked the Working Party to look at two specific issues on its behalf within the next 12 months:-
- (a) the Borough Council's current funding arrangements for the rural areas, looking in particular at the range of grant support for rural organisations and projects, but also at revenue and capital spending targeted specifically at the rural areas; and
 - (b) linked to the above, the cleansing of rural areas.

2. Provisional Work Programme

- 2.1 With the above in mind, the following provisional forward work programme is suggested to the Working Party for comment. Dates are provisional and subject to change.

What	Purpose	Source	When	Officer Lead
Rural Action Plan Update	To advise the WP of recent developments and funding decisions taken under delegated powers	Core business identified by Cabinet	Every meeting (or as required)	Kirsty Pitwood
Review of rural area funding	To advise Cabinet on a new funding strategy for rural areas in time for 2011 budget setting	Requested by portfolio holders	Scoping paper for review in Jan 2010, with a view to concluding by Autumn 2010	Alex Wilson/ Liz Watts
Business Rates (NDR)	To consider issues surrounding business rate relief in villages and the impact of the 2010 revaluation	Officer referral	Jan 2010	Hayley Urquhart
Mobile Youth Service Provision	To look at the future operation of the 'WOS Up' scheme	Officer referral	Jan 2010	Cathy Manning
Rural Housing	To examine rural housing need and delivery issues and to seek to attract additional external funding	Core business identified by Cabinet	From Jan/April 2010 and then ongoing as required	Carole Herries
Delivery of the Local Development Framework in the rural area	Following development of the 'masterplans' which are needed for Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill under the LDF process, the Council will need to consider a complementary approach (which will be necessarily different) for the rural area. The Working Party will be a key consultee for this work and may be asked to lead on specific elements as the work progresses. For instance defining, for the purposes of Community Infrastructure	Core business identified by Cabinet	Initial discussion in April 2010 and then ongoing as required.	Patsy Dell/ Ian Poole

What	Purpose	Source	When	Officer Lead
	Levy, the minimum expectations for facilities in villages of certain sizes.			
Fuel Poverty (Affordable Warmth)	To consider targeting of initiatives in the rural area where fuel poverty is often concentrated	Officer referral	April 2010	Peter Gudde
Neighbourhood development	To consider the Council's approach to the new neighbourhoods agenda in the rural area	Core business identified by Cabinet	Spring/Summer 2010	Cathy Manning
Parish Conference planning	To review the agenda of forthcoming parish conferences	Core business	Bi-annual at meeting prior to agenda being finalised	Emily Earl
Rural cleansing	To advise Cabinet on its future approach to the cleansing of rural areas	Requested by portfolio holders	Spring/Summer 2010	Mark Walsh
Rural deprivation and accessibility	To examine any findings of a pilot project instigated by the Diversity Group to map the location and distribution of various Council customer groups. When combined with other available data, this may allow the Working Party an insight into issues of rural deprivation and accessibility to services which will assist in the development of the Rural Action Plan	Officer referral	Spring 2010	Alex Wilson
Benefits	To target campaigns to promote take-up of benefits in rural areas	Officer referral	Early Summer 2010	Hayley Urquhart
Review of Rural Action Plan	To look at next steps when the current Action Plan expires in 2011	Core business identified by Cabinet	Autumn 2010	Kirsty Pitwood

2.2 In addition to the above items, further pieces of work are likely to arise during the year. This might include, for instance, issues arising from parish plans or matters referred by other partners (e.g. in relation to community safety). The work programme will therefore be kept under review.

3. Recommendation

3.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Working Party notes its terms of reference and comments on its provisional work programme.