



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

C393

Rural Area Working Party 14 March 2012

Review of Year One (covering the period 2011/2012) of the current Rural Action Plan

SUMMARY

The Rural Action Plan (RAP), covering the period from April 2011 to March 2014, was approved on 10 March 2011 (report B499 refers).

The current Rural Action Plan has now been in operation for one year and this report forms the first Annual Monitoring Report.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update Members on the progress made from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 on the projects within the Rural Action Plan.

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Review of Year One (covering the period 2011/2012) of the current Rural Action Plan

1. Background

- 1.1 The 2011-2014 Rural Action Plan has 37 projects which aim to help the Borough Council achieve its vision for the rural area: 'Active, sustainable and thriving communities in peaceful and unspoilt countryside'.
- 1.2 The projects come under four headings:-
- (a) *Empowerment* - enabling communities to help themselves (projects 1-8);
 - (b) *Environment* - improving both the built and the natural environment (projects 9-16);
 - (c) *Prosperity* - to generate a healthy economy (projects 17-23); and
 - (d) *Well-being* - actions which improve the quality of life of individuals and communities (projects 24-37).
- 1.3 Some projects are carried out on an annual basis, whilst others are one-off projects that will be completed before the end of March 2014.

2. Monitoring and review

- 2.1 The projects have been subjected to a traffic light approach, whereby:-
- (a) 'Red' indicates that a project is behind schedule and/or over budget (0 projects);
 - (b) 'Amber' indicates that the project was not due to start in year 1 or has been slightly delayed due to external factors (4 projects); and
 - (c) 'Green' indicates that the project is on time and on budget (33 projects).
- 2.2 Please find the progress report attached as Appendix A to this report.

3. Recommendation

The Working Party is requested to **NOTE** the progress made towards the implementation of the 2011-14 Rural Action Plan as contained in Appendix A to Report C393.

St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Rural Action Plan Monitoring report for 2011 to 2012

No	Project	Progress	Red/ Amber/ Green *	Changes needed to the plan
1	Deliver training for community leaders	The Suffolk Association of Local Councils has been commissioned to deliver a package of training in 2012-13 and the training is currently being drawn up.	Green	
2	Deliver funding advice surgeries	Suffolk County Council's Rural Development Managers delivered training on 7 November at Hundon Village Hall and 18 November at Horringer Community Centre. 11 community groups benefitted from the surgeries, plus the advice via phone and email that followed.	Green	Project now complete
3	Deliver the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund	The 'Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund' and 'Grant for Village Hall, Recreation Ground and Play Areas' joined to become the 'Rural Initiatives Grants Scheme' (RIGS) in June 2011. 3 applications for grants up to £4,000 have been approved (totalling £7,722), and 3 applications for grants between £4,001 and £10,000 have been approved (totalling £24,000 and subject to match funding being secured) as at 24 February 2012.	Green	New title – Deliver the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme
4	Deliver the 'Connected Villages' project	This project was carried over from the previous Rural Action Plan. Stanton Community Village Hall (July 2011) and Kedington Community Centre (November 2011) had Wi-Fi installed and the respective Parish Council/Village Hall Committees received their free laptop, router and grant towards broadband and phone line costs for one year. There are no more grants allocated for this project, however officers are still receiving some requests from villages for more information about the grant. Should more villages decide to have Wi-Fi installed in their village hall, then officers propose to offer them a grant towards phone line installation, phone line rental and broadband for one year (but not the free equipment); there is funding from the Rural Action Plan budget to cover this (for up to four villages).	Green	

No	Project	Progress	Red/ Amber/ Green *	Changes needed to the plan
5	Deliver a grant towards the cost of a projector and screen for community use	Westley and Great Barton have purchased their equipment and received their grant of £250. To date, seven other villages (Chevington, Clare, Denham, Fornham All Saints, Hawstead, Pakenham and Stanton) have returned completed application forms and are currently purchasing the equipment before claiming their grant.	Green	
6	Deliver the 'Help Yourself' pilot	<p>The council was approached by Hundon Tiddlywinks (Pre-School) in May 2011 for advice and funding regarding their project to develop a new community building (the existing village hall is heavily used and more community space is needed). A steering group has now been formed and regular meetings are taking place with borough and county officers and community stakeholders.</p> <p>The project will develop a local authority 'skills menu' which is felt will reflect the general needs of the majority of community-based organisations to effectively implement and sustain their projects. Communities will be able to access staff expertise from this menu on a time-bank basis and to 'pick and mix' which particular skills they feel they need most.</p>	Green	
7	Deliver a participatory budgeting event for Parish Councils	This project (which will aim to encourage rural communities to take an active role in the allocation of their parish council's grants) has not yet started and is due to be carried out during years two and three of the plan.	Amber	
8	Produce an information pack on running community events and street parties	This project is particularly timely due to the Royal Wedding, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the 2012 Olympics. Information has been added to the borough council's website: www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/OrganisingStreetParty.cfm . Flyers promoting this information were produced and given out (e.g. in Parish Conference delegate packs).	Green	Project now complete
9	Identify environmental organisations, projects and grants that are available in St Edmundsbury	Research has been carried out and a leaflet has recently been produced which identifies relevant current grant schemes and local environmental organisations. This leaflet is available via the Rural Action Plan web pages and will be disseminated appropriately, for example at the next Parish Conference.	Green	Project now complete
10	Deliver a tree and hedge planting scheme	25 semi-standard Oak trees will be planted this winter in 25 St Edmundsbury villages to form part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. In addition to the trees, which have been sourced from a local nursery, villages will receive mounted plaques, stakes and ties.	Green	

No	Project	Progress	Red/ Amber/ Green *	Changes needed to the plan
11	Deliver enhancement projects on St Edmundsbury-owned nature reserves	<p>For 2011-12 officers have focussed on enhancing Risbridge Meadows in Kedington, working with the Kedington Wildlife Group, Kedington Parish Council, Friends of East Town Park and volunteers.</p> <p>A new woodland was planted next to the river three years ago and since that time a programme of tree care has been carried out annually and new pathways have been created through the woods. The ground flora has been improved with the successful establishment of substantial flowering of Red Campion in Spring.</p>	Green	
12	Promotion and support for the Upper Stour Valley and The Brecks	Officers attend regular project meetings with partners. The borough council has also agreed to fund the Brecks Partnership (£10,489) and Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project (£11,997) for 2012-13. A promotional article on the two projects was produced for the August 2011 Rural News.	Green	
13	Further support for the development of the 'Sustainable Tourism East' project in St Edmundsbury	The aim of this project was for East of England Tourism, with the support of partners including district councils, to produce 50 local information guides (with associated business support opportunities for those businesses that featured in the guides). Unfortunately, following the demise of East of England Tourism, their element of funding for this project was withdrawn after only 16 guides were produced. Fortunately the guide for Clare and Cavendish was one of the 16 that was produced (however the other two guides that were due to cover areas of St Edmundsbury were not produced). The guides are available at tourist information points and at the participating establishments in Clare and Cavendish.	Green	Project now complete
14	Deliver the 'Business Carbon Cutters' grant and support	This grant is available to businesses across West Suffolk. 17 applications have been received since the project started in March 2011, and to date 11 applications have been approved. Measures that have been grant aided include loft insulation, replacement heating and lighting upgrades.	Green	New title – Deliver the Greener Business grant
15	Deliver the 'Warmer Greener Homes' initiative	The project, which received £60,000 from the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership, is being delivered through a partnership between St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, Suffolk – Creating the Greenest County, Suffolk Energy Action Link, Energy Saving Trust, Citizens Advice Bureau and Safer Neighbourhood Teams.	Green	

No	Project	Progress	Red/ Amber/ Green *	Changes needed to the plan
		<p>Good progress is being made and the project is on target to deliver energy saving measures to 400 homes in West Suffolk and remove 40 households from fuel poverty. Several promotional events and activities have taken place to ensure that residents are fully informed about the opportunity.</p>		
16	<p>Offer rural communities a comprehensive pack to enable them to carry out litter picks</p>	<p>All villages in St Edmundsbury were given the opportunity to apply for a free litter pick package, which includes litter pickers (for adults and children), bag hoops, fluorescent waistcoats (for adults and children), black plastic sacks and blue plastic sacks.</p> <p>Only one village was allowed to apply from each ward, and the applicant village must make the equipment available to loan to any parish, group or individuals who wish to undertake a litter pick within their ward area. The wards that are taking part are: Bardwell, Barrow, Chedburgh, Clare, Hundon, Ixworth, Pakenham, Risby and Stanton.</p>	Green	Project now complete
17	<p>Deliver social enterprise awareness events and training</p>	<p>A 'Community Enterprise Now' event took place in June 2011, held at Great Barton Village Hall. The one-day regional conference was for those people interested in community shops and pubs, village hall services, community transport and housing. St Edmundsbury Borough Council worked in partnership with Suffolk ACRE, Rural Action East, Co-operatives East and the Plunkett Foundation.</p> <p>For 2012-13 an event to promote the start-up of social and private enterprise is currently being planned with the support of Menta, the Suffolk Enterprise Agency and Suffolk ACRE.</p>	Green	
18	<p>Advice and support for rural enterprise</p>	<p>Officers have commissioned Menta, the Suffolk Enterprise Agency, to run free business advice sessions in village halls in Barrow, Great Barton, Hundon, Stanton and Wickhambrook during March 2012. The purpose of the advice sessions is to encourage people, including those who may have been made redundant or have had time out from work, to set up their own business.</p> <p>The project has been promoted in parish magazines, on village websites, by producing and distributing A6 postcards, and putting up laminated posters. Menta is also attending events at each village where people of working age will be (e.g. parent and toddler groups) to promote the opportunity.</p>	Green	

No	Project	Progress	Red/ Amber/ Green *	Changes needed to the plan
		<p>Although the official advice sessions start in March 2012, Menta has already seen people who arranged to come sooner and see Menta at their Bury St Edmunds office.</p> <p>Depending upon the success of the first round, the aim is for this project to be repeated for 2012-13 in another five villages.</p>		
19	<p>Deliver a small grant for rural shops, post offices and public houses</p>	<p>Several rural businesses have enquired about this grant, although some have not progressed because their projects have been ineligible. However the following progress has been made:</p> <p>Ixworth Post Office had a grant of £5000 approved in July 2011 towards painting and decoration, heating installation, signage, electrics, shelving, blinds, door fitting and a chair (this grant did not come from the Rural Action Plan budget, since there was some under-spend from the previous Suffolk-wide scheme).</p> <p>Fornham St Martin's Woolpack Public House had a grant of £5000 approved in August 2011 towards a new a grocery shop facility that will form part of the public house (again this grant did not have to come from the Rural Action Plan budget since officers were able to put the applicant forward for the Pub is the Hub 'Suffolk Community Champions' grant (where the Woolpack pub became the first successful recipient).</p> <p>The owners of Depden Farm Shop, Café and Training Centre (a brand new venture) have applied for a grant. The applicant saw a retail advisor in February 2012, and subject to positive feedback from the retail advisors a grant will be awarded.</p>	Green	
20	<p>Support the employment of apprentices in rural businesses</p>	<p>Officers will be working with West Suffolk College to deliver this project, although it will not officially start until 2012-13 - the college manage various funds for local apprentice schemes and are keen to use the funds that had a short time limit before they started offering the Rural Action Plan money.</p> <p>Once the project is up and running, it will enable an employer to apply to the college for a grant (up to £2,500) to support an apprentice and this will need to be match-funded by the employer.</p>	Amber	

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21	Support and promote rural tourism and heritage (Heritage Open Day events; national Mills Day events; and village tours)	<p>Guided walks in Clare and Ixworth took place throughout Summer 2011 and these proved popular with visitors and residents alike. The walks aim to increase awareness of the many visitor attractions to tourists in the hope that people will return to these attractions at a later time. Now that the walks have been devised, other guides can use them and vary them as appropriate for different groups.</p> <p>National Mills Weekend is now an established event, and Rural Action Plan funding has been used towards providing transport to take people to the mills in St Edmundsbury. As a result of this awareness-raising the attractions find that they gain repeat business throughout the year.</p>	Green	
22	Deliver a joint business event or activity in partnership with the Clare Business Association	<p>Officers attended Clare Business Association meetings in June and September 2011, where ideas for events and activities were discussed.</p> <p>Following a referral to West Suffolk College by officers, the Business Association arranged for West Suffolk College to run highly subsidised (through West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership funding) training sessions in one of Clare's cafés.</p> <p>In addition to this, early discussions are taking place regarding the delivery of an enterprise event in Clare during 2012-13.</p>	Green	
23	Create planning guidance on rural redundant buildings	A Draft Development Management Policies document has been prepared with Forest Heath District Council and was consulted on between the beginning of January and the beginning of March 2012. It is anticipated that the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will be published by the government by the end of March 2012 and a review of what guidance is needed for the conversion of rural redundant buildings will be taken in the Autumn when the outcomes of the consultation and the content of the new NPPF have been assessed.	Amber	
24	Deliver a grant/s to support Suffolk Roadsafes Partnership's ' <i>Community Speed Watch</i> '	Several enquiries about the grant have been received throughout the year by village representatives, however to date no grant money has actually been awarded.	Green	

No	Project	Progress	Red/ Amber/ Green *	Changes needed to the plan
25	Deliver a grant to help start-up costs for community cafés	As a result of promotion officers have received several enquiries, although these were from private enterprises and therefore ineligible for this grant. Officers understand that whilst several villages wish to set up a community café, they have difficulty getting enough local volunteers to enable the café to be sustainable. If this grant does not receive successful applications in 2012-13, officers recommend that the funding is allocated to other projects for 2013-14.	Green	
26	Deliver an allotment/shared land guidance pack and grant	<p>A workshop on 'how to deliver the benefits from allotments and other forms of local shared land use for local food' took place at the Parish Conference on 20th October 2011, led by the Local Food Officer at Suffolk ACRE.</p> <p>Suffolk Association of Local Councils has been commissioned to research and produce a guide, which is due to be published at the end of March 2012. The guide, entitled 'A modern approach to growing local produce' contains useful information about how to set up schemes including allotments, temporary allotments, portable allotments, community allotments, land share, and 'grow your neighbour's own'. The guide also includes advice on where you can get funding and support. In addition to the guide, a grant of up to £200 is available towards items such as signs, gates, fencing, water butts, and so on.</p>	Green	
27	Further develop the Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project (RCCIP) in St Edmundsbury	<p>A total of 42 visits to St Edmundsbury villages were made during 2011 (villages included: Ampton, Barningham, Cavendish, Chedburgh, Depden, Euston, Great Livermere, Hopton, Hundon, Ousden, Rougham, Sapiston, Stansfield, and Stradishall), which included visits to villages that have not received the service in the past. Visits to more villages are currently being booked in for 2011-12.</p> <p>In addition to their usual work, the Coffee Caravan Information Project organises 'Golden Age Fairs' – the purpose of these is to work in partnership with over 25 organisations to deliver a fair that provides a wealth of help and advice in one place, aimed at enabling people over 60 to stay fit, healthy and independent. Officers are helping to organise the first Golden Age Fair in St Edmundsbury, which will be held on Friday 11th May at Stanton Community Village Hall.</p>	Green	
28	Facilitate older people's wellbeing checks	A Falls Prevention Co-ordinator from the Primary Care Trust attended Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project visits at Ousden in June and September 2011 and Cowlinge in July 2011, where several referrals to falls prevention interventions took place. There will be more of these visits in 2012-13.	Green	

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29	Facilitate the delivery of housing needs surveys	<p>As a result of the Government's comprehensive spending review, and changes in the way the grant for new affordable homes is administered, the opportunity for putting forward new housing schemes will be limited until after April 2015. However, we are still in discussion with parishes to look at housing needs with a view to taking housing schemes forward after this date.</p> <p>Officers are working with Suffolk County Council on its 'flexicare' project, focussing on the care and housing of older people. This has presented an opportunity to look wider than just housing need and St Edmundsbury will be focussing on a pilot rural profiling project and the outcomes will help us ensure that we make best use of existing homes, and that any future development takes these factors into account.</p>	Green	
30	Host an event to promote Community Land Trusts	<p>A workshop outlining what a community land trust is, and what its benefits are, took place at the Parish Conference in October 2011.</p> <p>A regional conference on Community Land Trusts took place in Cambridge and so those villages that showed an interest were given the details of this event, which negated the need for St Edmundsbury to arrange its own event.</p> <p>There is a possibility that a Community Land Trust may be developed in the future at Highpoint estate in Stradishall. Officers have supported the Community Land Trust Manager at Foundation East in running a consultation event in February 2012, at which the majority of people voted in favour of progressing the idea. There is lots more work to be carried out, including further consultation, and officers will assist with this as appropriate.</p>	Green	
31	Help St Edmundsbury communities to be better prepared and more self-sufficient in an emergency	<p>A workshop on emergency planning took place at the May 2011 Parish Conference.</p> <p>Subsequent to this, officers held a workshop on 11th November 2011, where representatives from 11 parishes attended. The focus of the workshop was to explain how the scheme would work (the scheme involves developing a local Emergency Plan which will enable the village to qualify for a Community Emergency Kit, funded by the Rural Action Plan); to discuss the approach to developing a local Emergency Plan; and to solicit feedback on proposed kit contents. A similar workshop was also held at Forest Heath District Council offices in January. The consolidated feedback and suggestions for the kit list will be taken forward and the kits</p>	Green	

No	Project	Progress	Red/ Amber/ Green *	Changes needed to the plan
		<p>should be available shortly.</p> <p>The workshop theme will be continued, with meetings every six months. These will provide an opportunity for the parishes to share experiences and ideas; the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit to disseminate relevant information; and relevant guest speakers to attend (e.g. officers hope that the Environment Agency could attend to explain the new Groundwater Flood Alerting system that goes live in west Suffolk from the end of February 2012).</p>		
32	Deliver and support rural youth work	<p>The 'Wos Up' rural youth project has been successfully operating in St Edmundsbury for four years; the project's popularity and outcomes have increased year on year. In 2011-12 visits were made to Barrow, Barningham, Great Whelnetham, Hundon, Ixworth, Kedington, Stanton and Wickhambrook.</p> <p>Officers have successfully brought in £2,400 from Parish councils and £1,000 from Suffolk Open Weekend funding, however they are currently looking for additional external funding to increase the size and potential of the project. Additionally, officers are looking for funding to increase participation from females.</p>	Green	
33	Support initiatives that promote community self help and reduce isolation	<p>We have supported and promoted any organisations that have approached us (in particular, we have promoted Suffolk Circle as a new organisation to St Edmundsbury for 2011-12). We will continue to support organisations as appropriate.</p>	Green	
34	Investigate buying consortia in villages	<p>Officers have promoted the benefits of group buying through the Parish Conference and Rural News.</p> <p>The project was also going to involve producing a guide to explain how villages can make savings through buying consortia, however the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills recently produced a very comprehensive guide which has been promoted to villages (the guide is available via: http://discuss.bis.gov.uk/buying).</p> <p>Opportunities for community oil buying specifically have been promoted (e.g. the Suffolk ACRE scheme and the Havebury Housing scheme).</p>	Green	Project now complete

No	Project	Progress	Red/ Amber/ Green *	Changes needed to the plan
35	Deliver an improved cycle network within the borough	Officers have developed new off-road cycling routes around Nowton Park, and Rural Action Plan funding will be used towards signage and grass-reinforcement for these routes. Officers have also applied to Sustrans for £2,500 of match-funding towards this project.	Green	
36	Produce the St Edmundsbury Borough Council Rural Vision 2031	The draft Rural Vision document was published on 1 March for an eight week consultation period.	Green	
37	Support the development of community websites	This project is due to be developed in 2012-13.	Amber	

* 'Red' indicates that a project is behind schedule and/or over budget, 'Amber' indicates that the project was not due to start in year 1 or has been slightly delayed due to external factors, and 'Green' indicates that the project is on time and on budget.