

APPENDIX F

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 31 MARCH 2009

Title:

**SURREY RURAL PARTNERSHIP – CONSULTATION ON ISSUES TO BE
ADDRESSED BY THE NEW SURREY RURAL STRATEGY**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Bryn Morgan]
[Wards Affected: All Rural Wards]**

Summary and purpose:

This report sets out Waverley's response to an interim consultation by Surrey Rural Partnership (prior to a draft Rural Strategy being published in the summer) seeking views on the issues affecting rural areas. The Waverley response includes comments made at the Towns and Parishes meeting on 2 March 2009.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The Surrey Rural Strategy impacts on all of Waverley's Corporate Priorities

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The comments to the rural strategy highlight a number of issues which will help enhance equality of access to services and community cohesion for rural communities.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Background

1. The Surrey Rural Strategy was published in October 2003. In May 2008, the Surrey Rural Partnership agreed a project brief for a review of the Rural Strategy. In June 2008 four workshops were held for members of the Rural Partnership and representatives of partner organisations to discuss and agree current issues in rural Surrey and possible actions needed.
2. The result is the attached consultation Issues paper. This consultation is to check whether there are additional issues or suggestions for the Strategy ahead of the publication of a new draft Rural Strategy in the Summer. The issues are set out in four main sections:

- Aims and objectives
 - Rural Communities
 - Rural Economy
 - Rural Environment
3. In the attached Annexe 1, the issues are summarised in headline form and Waverley's draft comment is set out. Members are asked to endorse the response or suggest any additional issue for the new strategy. The response highlights the fact that overall the vision and objectives of the 2003 Strategy are still relevant and applicable. However, as a general comment the actions proposed need to be strengthened and more action focused with clear measurable targets to assess progress and achievement. A key observation from the Town and Parish Councils meeting was that the strategy needs to recognise the impact of county wide development & growth on Surrey's rural infrastructure (e.g. road congestion, water, resources etc.)

Waverley's support for rural issues

4. As a rural authority Waverley has always focused on delivering effective outcomes for its rural communities and plays an active role in responding to the needs of its rural communities. For example:
- Waverley has always been one of the leading local authorities in the south-east in delivering affordable rural housing schemes.
 - Waverley started the first farmers' market in Surrey in 1999
 - In 2003/04 Waverley was a Beacon Council for its work in supporting the rural economy and in 2005/06 it was a mentor on the rural excellence programme.
 - Waverley was one of the partners that undertook the Surrey Farm Study
 - As a completely parished area Waverley works hard to ensure that the needs of its rural communities and main centres of population are balanced
 - Waverley has been an active supporter of Parish Plans and was the first Borough in Surrey to undertake Market Town health checks
 - Waverley has campaigned for the retention of key local facilities in its rural areas such as village shops, pubs and telephone boxes
 - Waverley has supported the creation of the Surrey Rural partnership as a means to ensuring the voice of rural communities is effectively represented through the Surrey Strategic partnership and Local Area Agreement
 - Waverley supports the work of the Surrey Hills AONB, the largest part of which is situated in the Borough
5. As a result of the above, Waverley is well placed to comment on issues affecting its rural communities and is respected by its partners for the contribution it brings.

Conclusion and next steps

6. The issues in Annexe 1 cover a number of key areas of concern to rural communities across Surrey and in Waverley in particular. Overall, Waverley agrees that the overall goals, aims and objectives of the 2003 Rural Strategy are still relevant and applicable. Waverley would like to draw attention to the following key issues which need addressing as part of the new Rural Strategy:
- The Strategy needs to be assessed and reviewed at frequent and regular intervals
 - Access to services in rural areas is the key issue. Given that a full range of services can never be delivered in every rural community, this will be through a planned combination of public transport and community transport related to key areas:
 - i. The elderly and disadvantaged population for whom transport in a rural environment is proportionately more problematic
 - ii. The younger people who require access to further education employment opportunities and leisure activities in nearby towns for which transport is a critical factor
 - Access to and the poor capacity of rural Broadband presently inhibits business success and many rural areas are still served by inadequate broadband provision
 - Town and Parish Councils need involvement with current issues and engagement with major service providers coupled with opportunities to share information rather than additional training
 - CCTV in rural areas as set out in the report is neither practical nor likely effective. Rural areas need a more effective response to the increase in rural crime together with preventative action geared to the rural situation. Increased levels of Neighbourhood Policing and Support Officers has shown a good level of increased confidence in rural communities
 - Greater support for the full range of rural businesses; not restricted to farming which accounts for only a small element of commercial activity in the countryside. Programmes targeted at leisure provision and support and people working from home in a wide variety of fields, is now urgently needed. The Strategy must recognise the increasing value of non-agricultural businesses to the rural economy.
7. The Surrey Rural Partnership will be considering the comments it has received as it draws up a new Rural Strategy for consultation. The draft Strategy is expected to be circulated for further consultation at the end of the Summer. Any additional comments on issues of concern that should be included in the new Surrey Rural Strategy are welcome.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Waverley response to Surrey Rural Partnership be endorsed, as set out in paragraph 6 above and Annexe 1.

Background Papers (SDCS)

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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