

Rural West Area Plan Refresh

Decision Paper June 2011

Purpose of Paper

- 1) To recommend that a review of the current priorities for Rural West APB is undertaken and a new Area Plan is developed informed by both strategic and community priorities for the area.

Introduction

Rural West Area Partnership Board (APB) has been established for nearly 2 years. Initial tasks for partners were to agree a small number of priorities for the area and implement a delivery plan aimed at addressing identified issues and gaps.

To inform this process an area profile was produced which detailed the demographics of the area, key statistics and performance data. Additional information was also reviewed such as parish plan priorities, rural access studies and "Place Survey" findings that asked residents about community priorities and service improvements.

Trying to identify clear priorities for action however was a challenge. Rural West covers a large geographic area (46,700 hectares) and includes a diverse number of communities including market towns such as Neston and Malpas and small villages and hamlets. Unlike some of the urban areas of Cheshire West there was no major regeneration or development programmes to contribute to the APB's priority setting process. Taking the range of available information into account the APB needed to focus on issues that it could realistically address and also reflected the needs of Rural West communities.

It was agreed that the APB would focus on 4 key priority areas.

- Access to Services
- Transport
- Families, Children and Young People
- Community Engagement

Refresh of Plan

The APB has been engaging and listening to communities across Rural West through community forums and other community events. It has delivered a range of interventions including youth programmes, transport schemes, provided small grants to local groups and commissioned some targeted services.

Over the last year however a number of key national and local changes have been influencing the partnership landscape and the way public services may be delivered in the future. At a national level the Localism Bill, Big Society Agenda and reduced public sector funding will start to make an impact. At a local level the development of the Rural Regeneration and Housing Strategies, Local Integrated Service (LIS) modals and move towards shared services require the APB to reconsider where and how it “fits in”. By reviewing its current priorities and strategic focus the APB can ensure it is able to respond effectively to this changing environment.

As the APB starts to consider how it will respond to the challenges ahead it is suggested that there are a number of areas that need strengthening. It is recommended that the APB considers:

- a. A more robust Area Plan, performance framework and outcome measures.
- b. Its role in taking a strategic lead within Rural West particularly in terms of its influence and joining up of relevant key strategic issues, service delivery and community engagement.
- c. Its strategic priorities are appropriate for the area and are effectively responded to by the APB

A first important step is to re assess the key issues impacting on the area at both strategic and community level. This will support the APB in determining priorities and development of a realistic and effective Area Plan that is owned by all partners.

Recommendations

1. Establish an APB working group to:
 - a) To review Rural West area profile including:
 - Key data and statistics
 - National and local strategies impacting on the area
 - A review all relevant consultation findings undertaken by partners
 - Undertake further consultation if appropriate
 - b) Prepare an assessment of the findings and key recommendations for action.
2. The findings to be considered by the APB at a planning meeting to develop and agree a new Area Plan, informed by the above and to include key actions, performance measures and monitoring framework
3. Identify resources for delivery of key delivery plan activities