

Welcome to the Rural West APB end of year update report. 2010 has been a challenging year in terms of the economic downturn, rising demand for services and pressure on public sector finances. Rural West APB however has remained focused on addressing its priorities of, Access to Services, Transport, Young People and Families and strengthening its partnership with communities.

Over the last 12 months we have been engaging and listening to communities across Rural West through community forums and other community events.

We have delivered a range of interventions including youth programmes, transport schemes, provided small grants to local groups and commissioned some targeted services.

Over the coming year we will continue to support communities and provide opportunities for residents to influence and shape local services. We aim to achieve this through the new localism agenda, Cheshire West and Chester's emerging "Rural Regeneration Strategy" and building partnerships with local councils and communities.

## 2010 – Pictures say more than words



## Preparing for Emergencies



In October Mickle Trafford Community Forum was held at Shell UK's, Stanlow Manufacturing Complex. Attendees heard from the Council's Emergency Planning Team about how our emergency services deal with issues such as flooding, bad weather or a major incident. Shell's Fire & Security Manager, Stuart Warburton also outlined how the company responds to major accidents at the plant.



Chris Samuel, Emergency Planning Team Manager took the opportunity to promote the "Be Prepared for Emergencies" campaign. This includes an emergency pocket leaflet which provides useful information on not only what to do if a major incident happens but also how people can help themselves in preparing for a possible emergency situation.

For more information on how you can prepare for emergencies go to:

[www.cheshireresilience.org.uk](http://www.cheshireresilience.org.uk)



## Connecting in Willaston

The community forum held in Willaston Services Club offered an opportunity to find out more about the services available to residents living in the area. Welfare Benefits, Credit Union, Age Concern, Neston Children's Centre and local voluntary groups such as Community Activities in Neston came along to support the forum and offer advice on the services they provide. Local ward councillors were also on hand to listen to residents' issues.

## Sainsbury's brings more than 170 jobs to Neston



More than 170 jobs have been created in Neston as Sainsbury's launches its new store on Brook Street. Around three-quarters of staff taken on were either unemployed or students, including 12 who have been unemployed for a considerable length of time.

The store's efforts have already been recognised by Cheshire West and Chester Council, who has named the store as the runner-up in the Workability Response Employer of the Year awards for its efforts to help the long-term unemployed. Together with the Council, Sainsbury's ran a two-week course with a for people who have found it difficult to find work.

David Hinds, who works in the store's warehouse and has been out of work for 12 months, said: "It means everything to me being back in work, a different experience that I am enjoying."

## Rural regeneration strategy

The rural area of West Cheshire represents approximately 65% of the total geographical area of the Council. The rural area within West Cheshire is heavily influenced by agricultural, as well as industrial and maritime heritage.

The current population of the Borough is 330,000, of which the rural area totals some 26% or 85,800, but that is predicted to rise by 11% by 2031 with the number of residents over 75 expected to double to 50,000 by 2031.



Amanda Goff, who joins the administrative team after also being unemployed for the last year, added: "I'm extremely happy and proud to be working for Sainsbury's - just the thought of being able to support my son and myself financially is brilliant."

The 17,294 sq ft store was opened by Mayor David Clark, supported by Neston High School's first ever Head Boy and Girl, Zoe Peters and Ryan McCreadie. They were joined by the Claire Bear and representatives from the Claire House Hospice, which has been named as the store's charity partner.

As well as supporting the Claire House Hospice, the store is already making plans to support the community in any way it can, from donating its food waste to Bread of Life, a charity working with schools.

Store Manager, Tim Hassall said: "All of us at the store are from Cheshire, with the majority being Neston locals, so working for the community is important to us. That's why we're donating £200 towards the Neston Cenotaph appeal and are funding the Christmas lights and tree for the festival in the market square on 3 December - it's our way of showing that we're here to be a real part of the community."

Cheshire West and Chester Council is committed to driving forward the regeneration and transformation of key settlements and areas within the Borough. To do this it has identified four key regeneration programme areas; Rural and Market Towns, The Weaver Valley, Ellesmere Port and Chester.



- Environment & countryside
- Transport
- The changing demographics, e.g. the increasing ageing population

Consultations took place in conjunction with the Rural Housing Strategy in October and November 2010 and the outcomes of this work will feed directly into the Local Development Framework and Core Strategy. It will be used as a tool to help shape investment across our rural heartland, influencing public and private sector investment and attracting outside investment to the area.

### **The Rural Regeneration Strategy**

The Council recognises that the rural economy plays a key role in the character of the Borough. The Rural Regeneration Strategy will outline the regeneration programme for our rural area and market towns. It will set out the baseline statistics for the area, what successes we have achieved and how we can build upon those successes to continue to shape development and investment. It will also represent the views of the authority for developing sustainable rural communities and adopt the key information set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and Core Strategy.

The Rural Regeneration Strategy will be fundamental to ensuring alignment of plans, policies and investment programmes, in particular the Local Development Framework, Rural Housing Strategy and Local Transport Plan to ensure key priorities and opportunities are realised.

The strategy will consider important issues impacting on rural communities including:

- The need to attract employment and economic growth
- Affordable housing
- Community facilities and access to services
- Visitor economy and tourism

The strategy is due for completion in February 2010. Work will start on implementing the recommendations through supporting the Local Development Framework and other priority projects across rural West Cheshire. The intention is that through the delivery of this strategy we will develop a partnership of public, private and community sectors, working together towards a common vision and delivering the strategic priorities identified.



## People Power

Since coming to power the Coalition Government has been promoting the idea of the **“big society”**. This is based on the view that state and the market have become too big and too powerful, and that local and civic life need more support. The Big Society is based on a number of core principles:

- Give communities more powers
- Encourage people to take an active role in their communities
- Transfer power from central to local government
- Support co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises

But harnessing this experience and encouraging residents to play a more active role in their community can be a challenge. Fortunately rural communities are very resilient and have a history of self help and community volunteering. There are many examples of communities coming together to identify local issues and taking action to address them.

For example **Clip Clops** established in the ward of Mickle Trafford is a voluntary organisation which allows children to form valuable learning relationships with ponies. At the club, children experience close contact with the ponies, learn about their care, build confidence with animals, interact with other children and have lots of fun! The group is run by volunteers but through support they have managed to secure a range of funding which has contributed to building on the success of the club not just for this spring and summer, but for years to come.



**Saughall Uniformed Groups** pictured below



have been supported to achieve additional funding to help improve insulation at the scout hut.

Being part of a formal organisation or committing to give up a set number of hours or days a week can put people off committing to their time to support local charities or community activities. It is important therefore to think differently about volunteering and to look to more flexible approaches.

Establishing a local “Time Bank” is one innovative approach adopted by many communities. Time banks use time as a currency. You can earn a time credit for each hour you spend doing things to help others. You decide how often and what you do. People can offer a range of skills such as : Administration, Arts & Crafts, Home Maintenance, Book-Keeping, Budgeting, Computer Skills, Gardening, Dog Walking, Giving Lifts, Running Errands, Local Information, Knitting, Help with Letter Writing, Shopping, etc.

Over the coming year Rural West APB will promote and develop a package of support to encourage more resident involvement and volunteering across our rural villages and towns. Part of this support and advice will be to hold a best practice workshop similar to those previously organised exploring the benefits of parish planning and managing play areas.

## Localism Bill



In December the Government published its Decentralisation and Localism Bill.

The Bill argues for a shift of power from central government to local communities, and describes six essential actions required to deliver decentralisation down through every level of government to every citizen.

### The Proposed Steps

- **Lift the burden of bureaucracy** by removing the cost and control of unnecessary red tape and regulation, whose effect is to restrict local action.
- **Empower communities to do things their way** by creating rights for people to get involved with, and direct the development of their communities.
- **Increase local control of public finance** so that more of the decisions over how public money is spent and raised can be taken within communities.
- **Diversify the supply of public services** by ending public sector monopolies, ensuring a level playing field for all suppliers, giving people more choice and a better standard of service.
- **Open up government to public scrutiny** by releasing government information into the public domain, so that people can know how their money is spent, how it is used and to what effect; and
- **Strengthen accountability to local people** by giving every citizen the power to change the services provided to them through participation, choice or the ballot box.



The indication from the government is that local authorities will have a key role in implementing the proposed decentralisation agenda.

They will be the beneficiaries of decentralisation as power is passed to them through the Localism Bill and they will have a vital role in passing power to communities and individuals.

Rural West APB will be watching with interest the development of the Bill and the detail behind it. Over the coming months we will be considering how this legislation can support and improve partnership working in Rural West.

For further information on the Decentralisation and Localism Bill go to:

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/decentralisationguide](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/decentralisationguide)

## Play is For Everyone!



Rural West team held a play areas workshop in November to share good practice and offer advice to parish councils and community groups.

The workshop was chaired by Councillor Carol Weaver from Tattenhall Parish Council and also member of Rural West APB.

Officers from the Council's play team outlined some of the legal requirements associated with managing a play area and also highlighted issues such as available funding, insurance, repairs, maintenance and inspections.

Val Roberts from Tilston Playing Field Association gave an interesting presentation on how residents had come together to develop the play area in their village. Val talked about the challenges they faced, how they overcome them and the many positives that this valued community asset has brought to the whole community.

This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> best practice workshops organised by the Rural West Team. If you would like to suggest a theme for future workshops please contact the Rural West Team at:

[ruralwest@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:ruralwest@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

## Christmas Cheer in Tattenhall

Over 200 Tattenhall residents attended a carol singing concert in December outside the Barbour Institute. Thanks to local ward member's budgets and funding from the Parish Council a new lighting box was installed, providing power for the lights on the Christmas tree which can now be seen up and down the high street.



Community Forums	Please check our website or contact us for start times
<p><b>Broxton, 27th January 2011, Farndon</b></p> <p><b>Gowy, 8<sup>th</sup>, February 2011, Ashton Hayes</b></p> <p><b>Neston, Parkgate, Ledsham &amp; Willaston, 28th January 2011, Neston</b></p> <p><b>Neston, Parkgate, Ledsham &amp; Willaston, 5th February 2011, Little Sutton</b></p> <p><b>Mickle Trafford, 16th February 2011, Saughall</b></p>	

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