Panel:	S151 + Executive Councillor for Resident Services & Corporate Performance
Report by:	Zoe Warren Revenues and Benefits Manager
Lead Cllr:	Cllr N Hunt - Executive Councillor for Resident Services & Corporate Performance

Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
ALL	Open.	Yes

Executive Summary: The Local Government and Rating Act 1997 requires that each rating authority must compile and maintain a Rural Settlement List comprising of settlements with a population of less than 3,000.

The Rural Settlement List allows Huntingdonshire District Council to grant business rates relief to qualifying post offices, village shops, public houses and petrol stations to support small rural businesses and communities.

A review of the latest population estimates from Cambridgeshire County Council indicates an overall population increase of 3,615. As no settlements have crossed the 3,000 population threshold, it is proposed that the settlement list remains unchanged for 2027/28.

Recommendations

1.1. It is recommended that the Section 151 officer, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, approves the Rural Settlements List 2027/28 and publishes this by 31st December 2026 to facilitate the award of Rural Business Rates Relief for the financial year commencing 1st April 2027

	Key Corporate Plan Priorities
1	Assistance provided through the Rural Rate Relief scheme helps maintain essential businesses and services within rural areas, supporting thriving communities, enhancing residents' quality of life, and delivering effective and proportionate financial support

	Place Strategy Priorities
2	Rural Rate Relief supports the Huntingdonshire Place Strategy by helping to sustain rural businesses and services, contributing to resilient communities and ensuring Huntingdonshire remains an attractive place to live, work and invest.

Report Author(s)

Zoe Warren - Revenues & Benefits Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The Council is required to review and determine boundaries of Rural settlements, that is settlements with a population of less than 3,000, to facilitate the award of Rural Rate Relief in accordance with s42(b) of The Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended by The Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

1.2 It is a requirement of the above regulations that boundaries are set and published by 31st December each year in order to facilitate the award of Rural Rate Relief.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 Rural rate relief is applied to certain types of business within a rural settlement. It can be awarded where the only village shop or post office in the settlement has a rateable value of up to £8,500 or the only public house or petrol station has a rateable value of up to £12,500.

2.2 The Local Government Finance Act 1988 sets out that it is the responsibility of the local authority to determine any settlements which:

a) Are wholly or partly within the authorities' area
b) Appear to have a population of not more than 3,000
c) and are wholly or partly within a rural area designated by the Secretary of State for the purposes of rate relief scheme.

2.3 A rural settlement does not necessarily have to follow ward or parish boundaries, and a settlement can be defined by splitting an area based on other characteristics, such as geographical or demographic features.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 Towns and parishes within Huntingdonshire are all designated as one of three types of settlement:

a) Urban settlement - population above 3,000
b) Urban settlement - population above 3,000
c) Rural settlement - population below 3,000
d) Defined settlements – Where the total parish population exceeds 3,000, but a specific area within that parish has been "defined" as a separate rural settlement.

3.2 The current rural settlements list has been reviewed to take account of the latest statistical population data available from Cambridgeshire County Council. As a result of the review, it has been determined that no changes to the list are required.

3.3 Details of the qualifying rural settlements are shown in APPENDIX A, and map of all settlements can be found in APPENDIX B.

3.4 The following parishes are classified as defined settlements to maximise the number of businesses that benefit from rural rate relief:

a) Ramsey Forty Foot
b) Ramsey Heights
c) Ramsey Mereside
d) Ramsey St Mary's
e) Diddington.

Maps of these defined settlements are shown in APPENDIX C.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

N/A

5. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Following adoption, Rural Rate Relief will be awarded and applied to all eligible Business Rates accounts. Existing recipients of Rural Rate Relief will continue to receive relief where eligibility criteria remain satisfied. Entitlement will be reviewed where circumstances change.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Link to the Corporate Plan

6.2 The award of Mandatory Rural Rate Relief to qualifying shops, pubs and petrol stations in rural settlements directly contributes to the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan to improve the quality of life for local people and create a better Huntingdonshire for future generations. The relief supports the sustainability of key local services and amenities that are important to the vitality and resilience of rural communities.

6.3 Providing business rates relief to eligible small businesses also aligns with the Huntingdon futures strategy, supporting vital community amenities in rural areas by supporting key local services that help rural communities thrive.

6.4 Financial Implications

6.4.1 Qualifying businesses are entitled to 100% mandatory relief on their business rates. To date in 2026, the existing Rural Settlements List has facilitated the award of £46,222.22 of Relief to 21 qualifying businesses. The cost of this relief is fully reimbursed by Central Government through Section 31 grant funding, meaning there is no financial impact on the Councils budget or Collection Fund. This therefore provides valuable support to rural businesses while being fully cost-neutral to the authority.

6.5 Policy Implications

N/A

6.6 Legal & Constitutional Implications

6.6.1 The Council has a legal duty to set and publish the rural settlements list by 31st December each year.

6.7 Community Impact

6.7.1 The recommendation is expected to have a positive impact on rural settlements by helping eligible shops, petrol stations and public houses remain viable. This means residents continue to will continue to have access to important local facilities.

6.8 Environment & Climate Change Implications

N/A

6.9 Equality & Diversity Implications

6.9.1 N/A No Equality and Diversity implications have been identified. Rural Rate Relief is awarded in accordance with statutory eligibility criteria and is applied consistently to all qualifying businesses.

6.10 Implications on Resources

6.11 Health & Wellbeing Implications

N/A

6.12 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

6.12.1 The Council has a legal duty to review and publish the rural settlements list by the 31 December each year. As this report relates solely to the award of Rural Rate Relief to be awarded for the 2027/28 financial year here are no LGR implications arising from the recommendation.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 to review set and publish the rural settlements list by the 31 December each year.

7.2 If the recommendation is not adopted the Council would create a risk of non-compliance with statutory requirements and could impact in the Councils ability to award Mandatory Rural Rate relief to qualifying businesses

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight – Population – Local Population Estimates and Forecasts

8.1 Appendices

Appendix A – Rural Settlement List
Appendix B – Settlement List Map
Appendix C – Defined Areas Map

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