

RURAL STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE 2010 - 2015
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 2nd March 2010, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) considered a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services on the draft Rural Strategy for Cambridgeshire 2010-2015. Key stakeholders and partners currently are being consulted on the Strategy. The consultation period ends on 23rd April 2010. This report contains a summary of the Panel's discussions.

2. COMMENTS

- 2.1 The Panel has been informed of the background to the Strategy and noted that the Cambridgeshire Together Board commissioned Cambridgeshire ACRE to undertake this work with a view to identifying the challenges of living and working in a rural community. The Panel's attention has been drawn to the actions and "Ambitions" identified under the three themes of living in the countryside, economic well-being and land and environment.
- 2.2 The Panel has received details of the consultation undertaken to date with statutory agencies, community organisations, rural businesses and residents, with particular attention being drawn to Appendix A of the document which contains a summary of District Council Officers' responses to the actions proposed within the Strategy. Members have endorsed the comments outlined in Appendix A, but have also registered their concern at the lack of ownership, prioritisation and identification of funding to implement the Strategy.
- 2.3 The Panel has stressed the importance of recognising that rurality is an equalities issue. Comment has also been made that the Strategy sometimes lacks evidence of partnership working where it is required and Members are of the view that work carried out under the Strategy should be carefully co-ordinated. It appears there is potential for duplication in service provision. Indeed, the point has been made that efforts should be made to ensure that all organisations that could potentially be involved have not been excluded from contributing to the achievement of the Strategy. Members have particularly recognised the fact that Town and Parish Councils will be important in delivering many of the actions.
- 2.4 Having regard to the theme of living in the countryside, specific comment has been made on the need for retirement homes to be provided on "exceptions sites" in rural areas. This would enable elderly individuals to remain close to their families and communities.
- 2.5 With regard to the actions identified within the "Widening transport options" priority, the Panel is of the view that this matter requires action at the national level.

- 2.6 Finally, comment has been made on the difficulties faced by residents living in rural areas who do not have their own transport and who are reliant on other transport providers to attend health service facilities. While there are some local providers, including volunteer car schemes, it is evident that there are gaps in provision and this is something that could be addressed under the Strategy.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to consider the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) as part of its deliberations on the report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Minutes and Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on 2nd March 2010.

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