

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 4
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Report of the Community Capacity Manager

Contact Officer – Cate Harding
Contact Details – 01733 317497

SCOPING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RURAL STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE

The Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities is considering the development of a proposed Rural Strategy for Peterborough for the purpose of having a framework within which to highlight and support the strategic needs of rural communities across Peterborough. This report proposes a structure for this Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Commission is recommended to:

- (i) debate the requirements for a Rural Strategy, noting other work already underway to support rural issues
- (ii) if a Rural Strategy is agreed, debate the content of this scoping report in order to agree the purpose, content and format of the proposed Rural Strategy
- (iii) consider how best to engage with the Parish Liaison Committee to explore how they may contribute to the development and then management of the Rural Strategy
- (iv) consider how they may support the activities currently underway in Peterborough that support rural communities
- (v) consider the resource requirements necessary to deliver against a new Rural Strategy, identifying any options to enhance existing resources where necessary

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In response to the Commission's request, this scoping report sets out proposed contents for a new Rural Strategy for Peterborough.

3.2 The Rural Strategy would provide a strategic framework that ensures:

- issues, policies and programmes that affect rural communities are considered and adapted where necessary to best meet the needs of our rural communities
- any specific impacts that adversely or disproportionately affect rural communities are particularly considered and mitigated
- opportunities for rural-specific development or investment are identified and taken forward

- the needs of rural residents are considered and measures put in place to best support them as a result

3.3 It is proposed that the Rural Strategy contains the following key sections:

3.3.1 **Aims of Objectives**

This section will clearly articulate why the Strategy exists and what it will achieve. This will be unambiguous but ambitious, and will identify the communities affected by the Strategy and the agencies that will need to respond to it.

3.3.2 **A Sense of Place**

This section will provide a comprehensive description of rural communities in Peterborough, and it is suggested that we use the themes in the Sustainable Community Strategy to ensure completeness. These themes are:

- creating opportunities and tackling inequalities
- creating strong and supportive communities
- creating the UK's environment capital
- delivering substantial and truly sustainable growth

3.3.4 **Demographics and Performance Data**

This section will contain data and intelligence that helps to illustrate the make-up, fabric and issues within rural communities, and will complement the information from section 3.3.2.

3.3.5 **National, Regional and Local Drivers**

This section will provide an explanation of known legislation and policies that, at time of writing, impact on or support rural communities. This is important in order to understand any restrictions or limitations and how best to overcome them, but also to illustrate the art of the possible thus maintaining the ambitious nature of the Strategy.

3.3.6 **Current Activities Directly Linked to Supporting Rural Communities**

This section will provide an explanation of any existing rural-focussed programmes, projects and services. It will be important to understand the current levels of provision in order to identify gaps, duplication and effectiveness. It is suggested that this is completed via an audit of services and that the audit is conducted across all public and civil society¹ sector organisations.

As the content of both sections 3.3.5 and 3.3.6 is subject to change and variation, it will be essential to identify a method of ensuring currency of information at any time – it may therefore be necessary to produce these sections in the form of an action plan which is overseen by the suggested Rural Officer Group referred to in section 3.3.10.

3.3.7 **Common Themes**

This section will identify the common known and emerging strategic themes identified as a result of the Strategy's development. The Strategy will, in the main, need to be strategic and cross-cutting in nature, rather than focussed on any single community issue and this section will serve to identify these key themes. This section is amongst the most important as it will help define the work programme that supports the Strategy and will ensure we are focussing on the right issues.

¹ Civil Society describes organisations in the community, voluntary, faith, social enterprise and wider not-for profit sector (including social landlords)

3.3.8 Community Capacity

This section will discuss the nature and scope of community, including the capacity of residents and organisations to support the Strategy, community-specific issues or opportunities, and volunteering activity. This will help to identify additional resources as well as gaps, and again will help to focus our efforts more appropriately.

3.3.9 SWOT Analysis for Rural Communities

This section will contain a detailed analysis that will help us to understand the strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to rural communities and the policies and strategies that support them or that are proposed. The information can then be used to help shape and define the solutions and help to inform any investment or other resource issues (e.g. funding bids).

3.3.10 Governance and Accountability

This section will describe the governance arrangements to be implemented to ensure the Strategy is maintained and actions delivered. It is suggested that the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities maintains oversight of the Strategy, and that a Rural Officer Group be established to deliver against the agreed priorities and actions. Consideration needs to be given to the ways in which such an officer group as well as the Commission itself works with and supports the existing Parish Liaison Committee.

3.3.11 Action Plan or Work Programme

The final component of the Strategy will be the resulting work programme which will need to contain tangible, deliverable, ambitious and intelligence-led actions.

3.4 It is anticipated that, if agreed, the first draft of the new Rural Strategy will be presented to the Commission at its January meeting. In order to meet that deadline however, consideration should be given by the Commission to forming a short term working group to support officers and to help dynamically shape the production of the Strategy. In particular, it would be helpful for a working group to better understand the data intelligence and contextual information (sections 3.3.4, 3.3.5 and 3.3.6 refer) in order to inform the production of the remainder of the draft Strategy for debate in January 2015.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 To support a greater focus on working with, supporting and representing the needs of rural communities, the Cabinet have agreed to allocate special responsibility for rural issues to Cllr Peter Hiller, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Services and Ward Councillor for Northborough Ward. Cllr Hiller will attend future meetings of the Commission upon invitation and whenever available, to contribute to and learn from the debates and discussions held.

4.2 To help inform the debate at the November Scrutiny Commission meeting, a short presentation will be delivered during the meeting covering some of the headline data and other intelligence information currently being researched.

4.3 In addition, it may be helpful for Commission members to have an understanding of the current activities and programmes underway in Peterborough that directly impact or support rural communities. These are summarised in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Current activities and programmes relevant to rural communities

Activity / Programme	Description	Lead Organisations
Peterborough & Rutland Rural LEADER Programme (European funding bid)	Proposed Rural Development Plan to provide support for the economic, social and environment development in rural area	Opportunity Peterborough & Rutland County Council
Community Led Planning by Parish Councils	Supporting Parish Councils with Neighbourhood Planning, forward planning to evidence local priorities & inform budgeting	PCC Community Capacity Team, Parish Councils, Ward Councillors & CPALC
Community capacity building with parish councils	Assessing Social Capital and supporting Parish Councils to be able to meet needs of local community	PCC Community Capacity Team, Parish Councils, Ward Councillors & CPALC
Supporting voluntary youth clubs	Supporting the development and provision of volunteer-led youth provision in villages	Communities & Targeted Services – Locality Youth Teams
Community Budgeting	Devolving services / commissioning for delivering services differently	Communities and Targeted Services
Parish Liaison Committee	Quarterly forum / networking meetings for Parish Councils to meet. Informative, educational and interactive agenda items of common interest	PCC Community Capacity Team, Parish Councils, & CPALC
Peterborough Parishing Programme	Supporting local interest groups to explore the possibility of parishing	PCC Community Capacity Team, Parish Councils, Ward Councillors & CPALC
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	New form of levy for development to be introduced from April 2015. Parish Councils to gain from 15% allocation of CIL from developments in their area	PCC Planning & Community Capacity Teams, Parish Councils, Ward Councillors
Local Area Co-ordination and Micro-Enterprises	Programme to strengthen communities and support vulnerable people	PCC Community Capacity Team
Engaging Parish Councils with Emergency Planning arrangements	Supporting Parish Councils to enhance their role with emergency planning in their area	Growth and Regeneration Team
Annual Parish Conference	Annual networking event	PCC Community Capacity Team, Parish Councils, Ward Councillors & CPALC

5. IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 If the development of a Rural Strategy is agreed and the Strategy subsequently adopted by the Council, there may be service and resource implications across the Council and within some of our partner organisations. These will be identified and discussed further as part of the development of the Strategy.
- 5.2 However, the Commission should consider the financial and staffing resource implications of developing and delivering a new Rural Strategy. Consideration will need to be given to ways in which resources can be identified or freed up in order to ensure effective delivery.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 To date the concept of the development of a Rural Strategy has not been consulted upon beyond the members of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities. However, its development, if agreed, will need to be subject to widespread consultation to ensure completeness.

7. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 7.1 That the Commission endorses the development of a draft Rural Strategy for Peterborough, using the principles of co-production between officers and members, which will be presented back to the Commission at its January 2015 meeting.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Subject to the recommendations in this report being agreed, work will be done to draft the Strategy between now and the January 2015 Commission meeting.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 9.1 None.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 None.

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