

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of
Meeting:

5th September 2002

Title: MONITORING OF RURAL POLICY

Report of: Head of Economic Development

Report
reference: EDU.15/02

Summary:

This report provides an update on the actions referred to in the Funding section of the Strategy for Rural Carlisle.

Recommendations:

That the report be received.

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EDU.15/02

TO: CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -

5th September 2002

MONITORING OF RURAL POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is the first of a series of position statements on the Action Plans accompanying the Rural Strategy that was approved at Council earlier this year.

1.2 This report, the first of two monitoring reports to be prepared over the course of each year, aims to give an overview of the actions that are being taken, not just by the Council, but by other agencies.

1.3 The report is a snapshot of the progress that is being made in the implementation of the Strategy. Reports on other themes are being submitted to other Overview and Scrutiny Committees in this cycle. A report to the Executive is in the Forward Plan for the meeting on 30th September 2002

4. Staff vacancies have resulted in limited progress in giving the Strategy the profile and priority it perhaps deserves. It needs to be managed pro-actively, both within the Council, through the officer Regeneration Team and with partners. The implementation of the Organisational Review will address these issues.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

1. The following provides an update on the current actions under each action point relating to funding contained in the Strategy.
2. *Co-ordinating Funding through the Market Town Initiative (MTI):*

Potentially there a wide range of funding options, including targeted funds, available to help implement the Longtown Action Plan. Projects, however, will be at different stages of development and expected to be implemented at different stages during the life of the Plan. The development and implementation of these projects will be dependant both on capacity amongst partners to develop them and also the availability of external funding.

3. The Action Plan should facilitate a more strategic relationship with funders, however there are issues surrounding some of the funding sources which will need to be taken into consideration when project timescales are discussed in more detail.
4. For example, Members will be aware that the old Arthuret ward (along with Brampton Ward) was designated as a Transitional Area in the new Objective 2 Programme, this means there is a

shorter period is available to access funds. This is important, particularly for any capital projects which may come forward given their long lead-in times. The situation is further complicated by some parts of the MTI area not qualifying for Objective 2 and others within Irthing and Lyne being eligible for funding as late as the end of 2006 with an additional 2 years for implementation after that.

5. Also the North West Development Agency funded Rural Development Programme has been an important source of match funding for rural projects over the years. It is now in its last full year of operation pending the start of the Rural Action Zone (RAZ) funding regime. However, the annual budget available has been doubled and projects starting this financial year will have potentially a further two years of funding available. The RDP is also being encouraged to act as a pump primer for potential RAZ projects, for example to fund feasibility studies. An easy access fund is also available through the Programme for very small community based projects. Given that the funding regime of RAZ is still under development it would be sensible to maximise the benefit from the RDP. This may have an effect on the timing of some projects but should help to provide some vital "early wins" as the scope of the Programme is quite broad.
6. The Action Plan will provide a powerful tool for accessing funds and gaining support from partners. The above examples demonstrate what we know already that accessing funding is both complicated and changing. Some of the partners seeking to implement projects will need support in this area and there will be a need to promote the profile of Action Plan projects to funders. The City Council through the Regeneration Team and External Funding Officer will be able to help support these processes.

2.7 Brampton Action Plan

No further round of the Market Town Initiative has been announced by the Countryside Agency and therefore if Brampton wishes to pursue the development of an Action Plan alternative funding will be required. A joint Voluntary Action Cumbria (VAC)/City Council presentation was given to Brampton Parish Council about the options available, principally using the Countryside Agency's Vital Village programme as a catalyst to draw down other matching funds. This approach has worked elsewhere in the County.

2.8 Disseminating Information

A funding event for Carlisle and Eden was held in July at Newton Rigg organised partly by the Carlisle and Eden CVS's and VAC. Demand is high for information and help with funding issues amongst groups and organisations and therefore discussions are being held with Carlisle CVS and VAC with a view to organising a dedicated Carlisle funding event.

2.9 Supporting the Community in Project Development and Funding

Although not targeted at rural issues, a briefing for City Council staff advising groups and organisations was run to provide an update on the range of funds distributed through the Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF) and others. This was followed up by Carlisle CVS with training sessions for local groups involving the CCF. Support is available from some funders to help projects get off the ground; a particularly good example is the new LEADER+ programme, a European Community Initiative that operates in Brampton and Longtown plus Carlisle's Eastern rural uplands. Following an expression of interest they invite potential applicants to a workshop where they are taken through the whole application process.