

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

CARLISLE
CITY COUNCIL



COMMITTEE www.carlisle.gov.uk

Committee Report

Public

Date of
Meeting:

10th April 2003

Title: MONITORING THE RURAL POLICY – PROGRESS ON THE
'FUNDING FOR RURAL CARLISLE' THEME

Report of: Head of Economic and Community Development

Report
reference: ECD.9/03

Summary:

The report presents an overview of the progress made in implementing the Rural Strategy's 'Funding for Rural Carlisle' theme.

Recommendations:

That the Committee makes observations and comments on the report, with particular reference to:

- a. hold a funding fair or similar event in 2003/04 and establish a rural Carlisle newsletter, highlighting funding opportunities and project examples;
- b. submit reports to the Executive detailing
 - how the City Council is engaging with the Cumbria Rural Regeneration Company and the proposals which are being suggested for RAZ funding;

- the City Council's involvement and commitment to the Longtown Market Town Initiative.

Contact Officer: Neil Griffiths
Claire Rankin

Ext: 7124
7355

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – April 10th 2003

Monitoring Rural Policy – Progress on 'Funding for Rural Carlisle' theme

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report is part of a series of position statements on the Rural Strategy Action Plans approved by the Council in April 2002. This report is the second within the financial year and gives an overview of the actions being implemented and considerations for future policy direction and action programmes.

1.2 The new Rural Community Support Officer commenced in post on 13th January 2003, following the secondment of the previous post-holder to the Longtown Investment Partnership. With a full staff complement now in place, the Rural Strategy will be given the profile and priority needed to effectively deliver the actions outlined. This will include the publication and promotion of the Rural Strategy and the proactive involvement of other agencies in the development and implementation of the action plans accompanying the strategy. Internally within the Council, the corporate regeneration team will play a key role in delivering the Rural Strategy across the authority.

2.0 Overview

2.1 In order to set the actions being delivered through the Rural Strategy in context, there are several overarching policy issues which will influence how, what and when actions will be implemented. The four main areas are detailed below.

2.2 The Cumbria Rural Regeneration Company, which will deliver the Cumbria Rural Action Zone (RAZ) programme, will have a significant impact on regeneration in rural Carlisle. The board of the company has now been appointed. Charles Woodhouse has been appointed as the Chairman, with Chris Torkington as the Chief Executive and Richard Pealing as Head of Programmes. A first year delivery plan is currently being compiled. Several of the actions and projects in the Action Plans have been proposed to the RAZ for inclusion in the first year delivery plan.

2.3 Community led regeneration which embraces economic, social and environmental issues will be key to the delivery of the Rural Strategy. This approach has been adopted in Longtown through the Longtown Investment Partnership and the Market Town Initiative (MTI). The Countryside Agency provides models for this activity through the MTI and Vital Villages programmes which will need to be adapted and replicated in other areas in order to drive forward initiatives and programmes in the rural areas. Increasingly funding bodies are favouring this approach to area based regeneration. It is likely that the RAZ will prefer to fund packages of projects rather than small individual schemes and where individual schemes are considered the local strategic context will need to be evidenced. It will be imperative to have the infrastructure in place locally to deliver these packages.

2.4 In order to gain the support and commitment of partner organisations to the delivery of the Rural Strategy, a communication exercise needs to be undertaken. This work would involve contacting partner organisations to increase awareness of the Rural Strategy and the link to the intensive Rural Voice consultation exercise carried out in 1999/2000 which gained the support of all the major stakeholders in rural Carlisle. This exercise will need to make links with the Carlisle and Eden Local Strategic Partnership and Cumbria Rural Regeneration Company. The Council and the Carlisle Parish Councils Association would lead the exercise.

5. An important consideration for the Council will be the introduction of rural proofing for all policies and services delivered by the Council. Rural proofing involves the Council checking all policies and services in terms of their impact on rural areas and ensuring that rural needs are reflected and met through community strategies, local strategic partnerships and public service agreements. The Local Government Association has carried out an inquiry into rural revival which highlights the need for all rural (or part rural) authorities to implement rural proofing to take forward rural governance.

3. Funding for Rural Carlisle Issues – Progress on the Action Plan Tables

1. This section details progress on issues contained within the action plan tables (relevant tables attached at Appendix 1). Accessing funding continues to be one of the major issues and concerns facing groups within rural Carlisle. This is a common concern across urban and rural Cumbria. The complexity and sheer number of funding streams and grant programmes in existence is a frustrating and detrimental factor for many groups.
2. In order to facilitate and support groups to access funding a 'Funding Fair' was held in January 2003 to give groups direct access to many small and major funders. The fair was organised by Voluntary Action Cumbria (VAC), Carlisle CVS and the City Council with financial support from both the City and County Councils. The event was attended by 90 individuals, approximately 30 of which attended the "rural funding" seminar. Demand was high for the event with limited places. Overall the initial feedback from the event has been extremely positive which would justify holding a similar event in 2003/04. However the rural element of the event did not work as well as some of the other workshops probably due to the complex and changing nature of funding in rural areas. Consideration should be given to how dedicated rural funding events and activities can be undertaken.
3. In addition to disseminating information through specific events, it is proposed that consideration be given to the production of a rural newsletter, co-ordinated and produced by the City Council in which rural funding matters would strongly figure. This newsletter would fit well with the formation of the "rural office" within the Civic Centre. The aim of the newsletter would be to collate information and updates from rural funding streams and interpret the information in the context of rural Carlisle. Regular press releases and articles would also be issued to raise awareness of good news stories and successful rural projects.
4. Keeping up-to-date with funding sources and information is a major task for officers of the City Council and other agencies. Changes to grant programmes and new opportunities are announced on a continual basis. Several software packages are available to keep up-to-date with changes. The External Funding Officer has reviewed the major packages available. The "Grantfinder" system appears to offer the most comprehensive service. Consideration has been given within Business Units to purchasing the system. It is expected that the first years "trial" subscription cost can be met through existing base budgets. When the system is purchased it can be installed on all Council owned equipment therefore enabling rural parishes to access up-to-date grant information through the parish council IT network.
5. Longtown Market Town Initiative. It is likely that the City Council will be asked to support the Longtown Market Town Initiative by becoming the "Accountable Body" or fundholder for a

package of projects within the MTI programme. This will be a similar task to that carried out by the City Council for the SRB programme in Raffles. A report will be submitted to the Executive on 28th April.

6. Brampton Action Plan. Following a joint presentation by VAC and City Council officers, Brampton Parish Council has agreed to support a Healthcheck and Action Plan process for Brampton and the surrounding area. The intention is to apply to the Countryside Agency's Vital Villages programme and the Rural Development Programme to access funding to produce the action plan. VAC has agreed to facilitate a meeting between Brampton Parish Council, neighbouring parish councils and other key bodies in the area to formulate a way forward. It is hoped that the production of the action plan will be completed by the end of 2003. It is envisaged that the action plan will follow the Countryside Agency's healthcheck and action plan process which has been successfully used in other market towns in Cumbria. Once the action plan is completed it will support funding bids for project applications to, for example the RAZ and the North Pennines LEADER+ programme.
7. The Countryside Agency's Vital Villages programme offers a unique opportunity to all town and parish councils to take control of their future. There are several grant streams under the vital villages programme and the parish plan stream offers funding to parish councils to produce action plans for their local area. Burgh-by-Sands was chosen as a pilot for the programme. The parish was given access to consultant time and support through the Countryside Agency. The action plan is now at draft stage and is due to be launched in April 2003. Cumwhitton Parish Council has also been successful in applying for a parish plan grant and work is progressing to produce the action plan. Dalston Parish Council has also expressed an interest in progressing with a parish plan. Initial discussions are currently taking place. Through the work of VAC, in conjunction with City Council Officers, awareness of the vital villages programme will be increased. The aim is to ensure that 3 parish plans are initiated in 2003/04.
8. In order to ensure that parishes are able to drawdown the vital villages funding and develop the necessary funding package, matchfunding may be required, particularly for larger parishes containing more than one settlement. The matchfunding issue will be particularly relevant in areas which do not qualify for targeted European or central government support. It is suggested that consideration be given to the City Council applying for RAZ funding for a package of support to match fund vital villages applications. If the City Council was in agreement a pot of RAZ money could be held by the City Council and made available to parishes who express an interest and require matchfunding.

4. Conclusions

In summary, it is recommended that

- a. the report be noted, in particular the proposals to hold a funding fair or similar event in 2003/04 and establish a rural Carlisle newsletter, highlighting funding opportunities and project examples;
- b. two reports are submitted to the Executive detailing:
 - how the City Council is engaging with the Cumbria Rural Regeneration Company and the proposals which are being suggested for RAZ funding
 - the City Council's involvement and contribution to the Longtown Market Town Initiative.

Funding for Rural Carlisle Theme					
What are we aiming to achieve	What will be done	Who will be involved	When will it happen	How much will it cost and who will fund it	What will be the outcome
To co-ordinate funding through the Market Town Initiative and Vital Villages programmes	<p>Produce Action Plans for;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Longtown and b. Brampton c. Support parishes who express an interest to develop parish plans through the Vital Villages programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Longtown Investment Partnership, NWDA, CA, Carlisle CC, Cumbria CC b. Brampton PC, Neighbouring PC's, Carlisle CC, VAC c. PC's, VAC, Carlisle CC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Longtown Action Plan produced and published. Annual delivery plan for 2003/04 to be produced. NWDA mini-SRB scheme for implementation of projects to commence 2003/04. b. Brampton Action Plan process to commence April 2003 to be completed by Dec 2003. c. 3 parish plans to be completed by March 2004. Parishes expressing an interest, Dalston and Wetheral. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cost £17,000. Funded by CA and NWDA. b. Likely cost approx. £20,000. Funded by CA, NWDA, L+. c. Likely cost between £5,000 - £10,000 per plan. Funded through CA, NWDA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. One action plan produced detailing comprehensive programme for improvement in Longtown and area b. One action plan produced detailing comprehensive programme for improvement in Brampton and area c. Parish plans produced giving details of possible future projects
To disseminate information about rural funding opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage wider use and awareness of the VAC Funding Advice Service b. Hold funding advice events for parishes and rural bodies c. Encourage wider use and distribution of funding bodies newsletters (eg RAZ, L+) d. Raise awareness and profile of local success stories and rural projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. VAC b. Joint initiative between VAC, Carlisle CVS, Carlisle CC, Cumbria CC c. Carlisle CC (awareness raising), funding bodies to distribute eg CRRC, L+ d. Carlisle CC, local press 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ongoing b. First funding fair held Jan 2003. Events will be held on an annual basis c. Ongoing d. Carlisle CC to initiate campaign following launch of rural strategy – summer 2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Funded through VAC resources b. Jan 2003 funding fair cost £1,000 which was funded by Carlisle CC and Cumbria CC c. No additional resources required d. No additional resources required at this stage. Costs will be reviewed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of groups supported. b. 90 individuals attended funding fair in Jan 2003 (of which 30 attended the rural funding session). Aim to attract similar numbers to future events. Explore the option of a specifically rural event/s. c. Number of new groups/individuals receiving information d. Publicity campaign launched – summer 2003

	through publicity campaigns				
To support communities in project development and funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support existing Carlisle CVS training programme and establish training programme to meet needs identified through funding fair b. Encourage use and take-up of existing funding support workshops eg L+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Carlisle CVS and Carlisle CC b. Carlisle CC, funding agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Existing programme ongoing, Carlisle CC led programme to be initiated April 2003 (depending on demand) b. Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. CVS programme funded through own resources. New training programme supported by Carlisle CC contribution to be determined. b. No additional resources required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. CVS training programme outputs to date: 43 events, 594 individuals trained, 309 organisations assisted (these figures refer to urban and rural areas). New training programme will support 15-20 new groups depending on demand. b. Number of additional groups accessing workshops