

RURAL ISSUES – DISCUSSION ITEM

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What is the Commission being asked to do?

1. To consider setting up a task and finish group with a specific rural focus based on one of more of the suggested topics below; and
2. To seek Members of the Improvement and Review Commission in the first instance to serve on the Task and Finish Group, reporting to the Commission on 9 November 2016.

Background

At the last meeting of the Commission (11 November 2015) the need to focus on rural issues was highlighted as part of the debate on the Council's Corporate Plan.

Further to that discussion the Commission is asked whether it wishes to establish a Task and Finish group to explore this issue further.

Possible scope of the Task and Finish Group

From a review of scrutiny reviews elsewhere, an analysis of the last residents' survey and the issues considered by the Rural Forum, four areas have been identified for consideration.

The scope of the Task and Finish Group needs to be defined carefully in order to ensure it has a manageable remit and can report back to the Commission within a reasonable period of time, say six months.

It is envisaged that the bulk of the work of the Task and Finish Group will be externally focused, meeting with key stakeholders. The recommendations arising from the review are therefore likely to be directed at partner agencies, as well as the District Council.

The Commission is asked to consider **one** of the following areas, or one other area:

Option 1 - Connectivity

This could explore issues regarding access to services from rural communities, including public transport and broadband.

Option 2 - Employment and Tourism

This could explore issues relating to rural job creation, rural skills (apprenticeships) for the farming industry and expanding tourism opportunities.

Option 3 - Quality of Life

This could explore issues relating to deprivation in rural areas and community cohesion, including the role of the voluntary and community sector.

Option 4 - Living Countryside

This could explore issues relating to conserving and protecting our countryside (AONB) and access to the countryside (green infrastructure, e.g. parks).

Membership

The aim is to have a cross-party membership of between 6 and 9 Members.

Next Steps

To agree the membership of the Task and Finish Group ahead of the first meeting when the detailed terms of reference and conduct of the review can be determined.

Background Papers

Residents Survey 2014