

**Leicestershire Strategic Senior Officer Group**

**19<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

**Review of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership**

**Report of Leicestershire County Council**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To inform SSOG of changes being made to the structure and operations of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP), and to seek views on how best the LRP can support the delivery of key initiatives, including the Local Area Agreement, in Leicestershire. .

**Background**

2. Since the early 1990s the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) has worked to deliver improvements to the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities in rural Leicestershire. The LRP currently has 19 member organisations, and oversees the delivery of a rural programme worth £2.4 million. The funding is levered in through a variety of sources including emda, Lottery, District and Borough Councils, and the private sector. The LRP currently works to the Leicestershire Rural Strategy 2004-9, and is identified as a key delivery agency by both Leicestershire Together and the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership.
3. In June the LRP's Management Board agreed that the structure and operations of the LRP should be reviewed to take account of a number of key contextual changes. In particular there have been substantial changes to national and regional rural policy (post the Haskins review) and, more locally, the emergence of the Local Area Agreement.
4. In September the LRP's Board agreed to:
  - a. Review and update the Rural Strategy, with the revised Strategy covering the period from 2007-2013;
  - b. Review Membership at all levels of its structure;
  - c. Strengthen its Co-ordination Group, which acts as the Board's Executive Group; including by ensuring that it includes representatives of all relevant key stakeholders;
  - d. Disband the existing theme-based Programme Teams which currently co-ordinate and performance manage project development and delivery – in some areas there is now unhelpful duplication between the LRP and LAA arrangements;
  - e. Seek approval from Leicestershire Together for the LRP's Co-ordination Group to be represented on each of the LAA Block Groups by a 'rural issues' champion.;
  - f. Establish a LRP Forum to engage wider stakeholders, including those previously involved at Programme Team level.

5. A key driver for the changes agreed by the LRP's Board has been the need to align the LRP's activities with the LAA and to minimise any duplication between LAA and LRP structures. The LRP is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the Rural Social and Community Programme, covering Rutland and Leicestershire. The programme, part of the Strong Communities Delivery Plan, is worth £144,500 per year until March 2008. It provides funding to support approaches to Rural Housing, Social Enterprise, Social Inclusion and Community Capacity building.
6. SSOG's support is particularly sought for item e) above. Such representation will ensure the needs of rural Leicestershire are taken fully into account in the further development and implementation of the LAA, and demonstrate that the following section from the latest Government Guidance on LAAs is being addressed:

‘LAAs provide a good opportunity to deliver the Government’s rural policy priorities – to tackle disadvantage and social exclusion in rural areas, help underperforming rural economies to begin to catch up with the best, and to ensure our natural heritage is protected and enhanced. In an LAA covering rural areas we would expect to see commitments to meeting the needs of those people and communities. We would expect that, where rurality poses challenges to delivery, the authority would seek to find innovative solutions either by developing them themselves or by seeking good practice examples from others.’ (Local Area Agreements: Guidance for Round 3 and Refresh of Rounds 1 and 2, ODPM March 2006, para 23)

### **Recommendation**

6. It is recommended that SSOG:
  - a) notes the LRP's ongoing review of its structure, operations and Rural Strategy;
  - b) supports the proposal that the LRP be represented on each LAA Block Group.

### Officers to contact

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