

Report to: **Hub Committee**
Date: **19 March 2019**
Title: **Support for a Rural Strategy**
Portfolio Area: **Resources and Performance – Cllr Edmonds**
Wards Affected: **All Wards**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision) **After Call In
27 March 2019**

Author: **Nadine Trout** Role: **Commissioning Manager**

Contact: Nadine.Trout@swdevon.gov.uk 01822 813624 or
Lisa.Buckle@swdevon.gov.uk 01803 861413

RECOMMENDATION

That the Hub Committee RESOLVES to:

1. Support the Rural Services Network’s Rural Strategy and demonstrate the Council’s support by following the approach outlined in Section 5 of this report.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report is presented by the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance and details work undertaken by the Rural Services Network on a Rural Strategy.
- 1.2 The report provides a simple one page overview of the Rural Strategy and reasons why it is considered prudent for the Council to support the Rural Services Network’s Strategy.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council is a member of the Rural Services Network (RSN) which is a national champion for rural services, ensuring that people in rural areas have a strong voice.

2.2 RSN role is to fight for a fair deal for rural communities to maintain their social and economic viability for the benefit of the nation as a whole. The RSN have four key priorities as follows:

- Public Sector Funding
- Barriers to Access
- Future of Rural Areas
- Health and Wellbeing

2.3 Central Government has historically and systematically underfunded rural areas giving them less grant per head than urban areas – despite the fact that it costs more to provide the services. Rural residents earn less on average than those in urban areas and pay more Council Tax for fewer local government services. Government policy, implicitly, is that Council services in rural areas are more reliant on funding through council tax than their urban counterparts. RSN therefore demands fairer funding for all public services serving rural areas and has been instrumental in lobbying for the Rural Services Delivery Grant which equates to £464,365 for this Council in 2019/20. Nationally, the Rural Services Delivery Grant allocation for 2019/20 was increased to £81 million; an increase of £16 million on the previously planned £65 million allocation.

2.3 In February 2019 the RSN wrote to the Leader of the Council to ask that the Council sign up to the RSN Rural Strategy Campaign. Appendix A of this report provides key messages about the RSN Rural Strategy and its further ask of Government.

3 Outcomes/outputs

3.1 The production of this report is to raise awareness of the RSN Rural Strategy and seek support from Members.

4 Options available and consideration of risk

4.1 Do nothing further

It is recognised that the RSN has made significant progress in lobbying Government for fairer funding which has aided in the delivery of the Rural Services Delivery Grant. However, in light of the current funding position of rural Councils, more work is still needed.

4.2 Take action

4.1 By setting steps as detailed in section 5 the Council is proactively responding to the RSN's request and lobbying Government for fairer funding and access to services for rural residents. It is therefore deemed appropriate to pursue this option.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1 A letter be written to the RSN by the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Resources on behalf of the Council, stating that the Council is in full support of the RSN Rural Strategy.

- 5.2 A letter also be written to the Right Honourable Geoffrey Cox MP, and Right Honourable Mel Stride MP to seek their support for the RSN Rural Strategy.
- 5.3 All Members are encouraged to circulate the following link: <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/time-for-a-rural-strategy> to as many residents and contacts as possible to back the Rural Strategy Campaign.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	Hub Committee has a responsibility to provide Leadership to the overall activities of the Council.
Financial	N	There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.
Risk	Y	A failure to support the RSN Rural Strategy would lead to: A missed opportunity to lobby Government for fairer funding. These risks are mitigated by: The recommendations outlined in this report
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		None – no policy or service change is proposed in this report.
Safeguarding		None – no policy or service change is proposed in this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None – no policy or service change is proposed in this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None – no policy or service change is proposed in this report.
Other implications		-

Supporting Information

Appendix A - RSN Rural Strategy Key Messages