

Local Plan Committee

15th August 2016

Item
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Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Karen Syrett 01206 282476
Title	Essex Rural Strategy		
Wards affected	All		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to note the publication of the Essex Rural Strategy along with the summary of the vision, aims and priorities.

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To note the publication of the Essex Rural Strategy along with the summary of the vision, aims and priorities which provides a reference and overview.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To make members aware of publication of the Strategy.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 There are no alternative options – the report is for information only.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 Essex is made up of almost 1500 square miles, 72% of this is considered to be rural. Around 36% of the population of Essex call these rural areas home. In Colchester approximately 30% of the population live in areas classified as rural. This compares to 80% of the population in Uttlesford and at the other end of the spectrum, Basildon, Castle Point and Harlow which have almost no resident population in areas that are classified as rural.
- 4.2 The challenges of living in the rural parts of the county include the increased distances to key services and the access to main transport links. Other differences between urban and rural parts of the county include house prices, house types, travel to school. There is almost no difference in the proportional breakdown of hours spent travelling by people in Urban and Rural communities.
- 4.3 The Essex Rural Partnership brings together organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to co-ordinate action on the major economic, social and environmental issues facing rural Essex.

- 4.4 To kick start the production of the Strategy, the Essex Rural Partnership invited representatives of rural communities, including District and Parish Councillors, to a consultation event in July 2015. This event mapped out the key issues of concern for communities in rural Essex and identified overarching themes for the strategy. The consultation event also helped to develop a survey (Essex Rural Strategy Questionnaire) of people living and working in rural Essex, which was conducted in 2015 with over 1,600 responding, around 70% of them rural residents. The findings of this survey have determined the strategic priorities.
- 4.5 The new strategy sets out 38 priorities across 10 chapters, highlighting what is important for those who live and work in rural Essex, and for the environment. The ten themes are as follows;
- Chapter 1: Harnessing the potential in our rural economy
 - Chapter 2: Education and skills for life
 - Chapter 3: Farming for the future
 - Chapter 4: Attracting visitors to rural Essex
 - Chapter 5: Celebrating our culture and heritage
 - Chapter 6: Securing a place to live
 - Chapter 7: Accessing the services we need
 - Chapter 8: Thriving and pro-active communities
 - Chapter 9: Feeling safe and reducing crime
 - Chapter 10: Protecting and promoting our natural environment.
- 4.6 The new vision for the strategy is of 'A county which engages, values and respects its rural environment; and where rural communities fully contribute to and benefit from a healthy, prosperous and connected Essex.' It is intended that this will be achieved by focussing on 4 aims: prosperity, well-being, connection and innovation.
- 4.7 A six-step plan details how delivery will be achieved. At the launch of the Strategy several of the speakers made reference to the short-term future being a time of great change and uncertainty, and highlighted the importance of a united strategic direction whilst working in such an environment.
- 4.8 Some of the challenges for rural communities which are highlighted in the report are relevant to the production of the local plan: how we support the needs and recognise the contribution of an ageing population; how we ensure that improved broadband is augmenting and not displacing the face-to-face interactions in village halls, local shops, pubs and green spaces that are the lifeblood of rural communities; how we deliver affordable housing; and how we tackle pockets of rural deprivation and ensure everyone can access opportunities and services.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 The Local Plan Committee is asked to note the publication of the Essex Rural Strategy which provides useful background evidence. The Strategy will be added to the Council's website along with a link to other documents referenced by the Essex rural partnership
http://essexruralpartnership.org.uk/Essex_Rural_Strategy.aspx

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 Effective strategic planning supports the Strategic Plan Action Plan which includes a commitment to make Colchester a vibrant, prosperous, thriving and welcoming place.

7. Consultation and Publicity

- 7.1 None.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 N/A.

9. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Plan and is available to view by clicking on this link:-
<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4962/Strategic-Policy-and-Regeneration>
or go to the Colchester Borough Council website
www.colchester.gov.uk and follow the pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Strategic Policy and Regeneration and select Local Development Framework from the Strategic Planning and Research section.
- 9.2 There are no particular Human Rights implications.

10. Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management Implications

- 10.1 None

13. Disclaimer

- 13.1 The information in this report was, as far as is known, correct at the date of publication. Colchester Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any error or omission.