

## **REPORT OF THE LEADER**

### **RURAL SERVICES NETWORK – PROPOSED MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for the County Council to join the recently established Rural Services Network.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. In previous years, the County Council has been a member Rural Commission of the Local Government Association (LGA). Following structural changes at the LGA, the Rural Commission no longer exists. The Rural Services Network is a special interest group for local authorities which cover a rural area to join together to campaign on behalf of rural areas, share best practice and improve rural services.
3. The Network operates through two sub-groups: the Sparse Rural special interest group, and the Rural Assembly. Each sub-group will meet three times per year, in London. There will be an annual conference each September, held in partnership with the LGA.
4. As an example of its achievements in arguing the rural financial case with the Department for Communities and Local Government, in 2013/14 allocation discussions, the Network achieved a greater weighting to the sparsity factor, which brought an additional £94,379 to Nottinghamshire. The Network is keen for authorities covering rural areas to become members and strengthen its position in discussions on the 2015/16 budget allocation.
5. It is proposed that the Leader of the County Council be the representative on the Network, and that membership be reviewed in a year's time.

#### **Other Options Considered**

6. The authority could decide not to join the Rural Services Network, but would thereby lose the opportunity to influence debate or share good practice.

#### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

7. To enable the County Council's participation in the Rural Services Network special interest group.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

8. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

9. The initial cost of joining the Network is £495 for 2014/15. This would increase to £1,800 per year (for a minimum of three years) if the Network's efforts achieve additional grant funding of £8,000 or more for the County Council. The cost of membership can be met from the budget for membership subscriptions.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the County Council become a member of the Rural Services Network special interest group.
- 2) That the Leader of the County Council be the authority's representative on the Network.
- 3) That membership be reviewed after twelve months.

**Councillor Alan Rhodes**  
**Leader of the County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Paul Davies, Democratic Services

## **Constitutional Comments (GR 27/05/14)**

10. Pursuant to Section 2(5) of the County Council's Constitution, the Policy Committee has the delegated authority to consider and approve the recommendations contained within this report.

## **Financial Comments (SEM 19/05/14)**

11. The financial implications are set out in the report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Letter dated 9 April 2014 from Chair of Rural Services Network to Leader of the County Council

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected** - All