Nottinghamshire County Council

REPORT OF THE LEADER

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK – REVIEW OF MEMBERSHIP

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for the County Council to renew its membership of the Rural Services Network.

Information and Advice

2. In the past four years, and for a variety of reasons, the Rural Commission at the Local Government Association, the Commission for Rural Communities, the National Rural (Knowledge Exchange) and Action for Market Towns have all ceased to operate. The County Council was a member of the Rural Commission of the Local Government Association (LGA).

3. The Rural Services Network was set up in 2014 to bring together rural local authorities and service providers and to share information on key rural issues, including best practice. It is officially a special interest group of the LGA and operates through two sub-groups: the Sparse Rural special interest group, and the Rural Assembly. Each sub-group meets three times per year, in London, with an annual conference each September, held in partnership with the LGA. Nottinghamshire County Council agreed last year to join the Rural Assembly, at an annual membership fee of £495.

4. Membership of the Rural Assembly provides access to services relating to general rural services, housing and economic development. These services include e-newsletters and commentary on key rural issues: information on current consultations and funding opportunities, such as the recent opportunity to feed in to an emerging national consultation on rural crime; access to a library of rural best practice; and a range of seminars for officers and Members.

5. In 2014 it was agreed that the Leader would be the County Council's representative on the Network, and that membership and representation would be reviewed again in a year's time. Membership of the network is beneficial to the authority and it is recommended that this continues. Officer support is provided through the County Council's Conservation Team. It is suggested that the representative for 2015/16 be nominated by the Team Manager, Democratic Services after consultation with the Business Manager of the Labour Group.

Other Options Considered

6. The authority could decide not to renew its membership of 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 continued 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 cost of renewing membership of the Network is £495 for 2015/16. The cost of membership can be met from the budget for membership subscriptions.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1) That the County Council renews its membership of the Rural Services Network special interest group.

2) That the Team Manager Democratic Services (after consultation with the Business Manager of the Labour Group) nominates the County Council's representative on the network for 2015/ 2016.

3) That membership is reviewed again after a further twelve months.

Councillor Alan Rhodes
Leader of the County Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Heather Stokes, Team Manager, Conservation.

Constitutional Comments (SLB 07/07/15)

10. Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (SES 07/07/15)

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

Background Papers and Published Documents

- None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All