

# HEREFORDSHIRE THINKS RURAL

## PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: RURAL REGENERATION AND STRATEGY

CABINET

1ST SEPTEMBER, 2005

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### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

To endorse the draft of "Herefordshire Thinks Rural", an approach to rural proofing.

### Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

### Recommendation

- THAT (a) the content of Herefordshire Thinks Rural be endorsed;**
- (b) a Members' workshop be held to permit any further refinements;**
- and**
- (c) a more detailed report on how the action plan can be delivered be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 29th September, 2005.**

### Reasons

To establish a Herefordshire approach to rural proofing.

### Considerations

1. The notion of rural proofing, the means by which local authorities and other organisations including Government test out their service delivery, policies and strategies in a rural context has been in existence for a number of years. The extent to which it is applied has been more haphazard.
2. In Herefordshire the need to reflect this was originally demonstrated through the impact assessments required to comply with the Race Relations Amendment Act within the Diversity agenda. One of the categories against which policies and service delivery are now tested is access. Particularly through inspections, officers and Members have been asked to evidence what we do differently or what is the result of operating in a rural area and what impact that has on our thought process. Our response has been that this is almost intuitive. However, over recent years both peer challenges and inspections have consistently raised the issue. Most recently in the

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Jane Jones, Director of Corporate and Customer Services on (01432) 260037

area wide 14-19 inspection this was a theme which emerged.

3. In April of 2005 Alison Mclean Consulting was therefore commissioned to undertake a piece of work aimed at defining what it is that makes Herefordshire distinctive, to look at current practice in relation to rural proofing and to construct an action plan which the authority could use to move its thinking in this area forward.
4. The work was undertaken in a comparatively short period up until the middle of July. In addition to desk top research, drawing on good practice from other areas and authorities, it was mapped across to the activities of, for example, the Countryside Agency. Alison McLean worked with a small group of senior officers who met a limited number of times over the course of the work to develop Herefordshire Thinks Rural.
5. The document, which is attached, is divided into three with an executive summary. The first section is a definition of Herefordshire followed by an analysis of the current position including examples of good practice and case study material and the third is an action plan which is divided into short medium and long term actions which Cabinet is asked to consider.
6. In addition the current document should be used as a starting point for further development particularly involving a Members' workshop with the aim of modifying the content and actions appropriately.
7. Progress has been reported to the Herefordshire Partnership Board and including the initial application relating to the Council, it is prepared to discuss how principles can be applied across the Partnership/
8. Finally, there is already considerable interest regionally and nationally about this piece of work and particularly in relation to future local area agreements.
9. Once agreed the report will be published. At that stage the use of maps etc will need to be acknowledged.

## **Alternative Options**

None

## **Risk Management**

The capacity of the organisation to implement actions.

## **Consultees**

None

## **Background Papers**

None