

DRAFT-Paper to the West Sussex Rural Partnership (WSRP) to be discussed at the meeting on 20 September 2011

The role and remit of the Rural West Sussex Economy Group (RWSEG)

Background

The Rural West Sussex Skills Steering Group was set up in 2010 to oversee the research, consultation and action planning process of the Skills and Enterprise in Rural West Sussex study and a supporting action plan.

The report was published in October 2010 followed by the draft: '*Action plan for skills and enterprise in rural West Sussex*' in December 2010. The Rural Skills Steering Group became the Rural West Sussex Skills and Enterprise Group to oversee the delivery of the action plan.

After the publication of the study and action plan, the RWSSEG developed its membership to include representatives of the District Councils, the Federation of Small Businesses and the National Park.

In July 2011 the group discussed and agreed to propose to the WSRP that its remit be broadened to take in the wider economic agenda for rural West Sussex.

Proposal

It is proposed that the remit of the RWSSEG is widened to enable the group to deal with economic development issues for rural West Sussex. It is also proposed that the RWSSEG changes its name to the Rural West Sussex Economy Group (RWSEG) and that it takes on an active role to assist the WSRP in the delivery of economic programmes and projects. This should enable the WSRP to keep a balance at strategic level between economic issues and other relevant areas related to social and environmental issues.

The Group has reviewed its membership to ensure all players required to fulfil this new role are included in the Group. All rural local authorities in West Sussex have been invited to take part as well as the Federation of Small Businesses and the South Downs National Park. The Group will also encourage more private sector representatives where they could bring suitable expertise and investment. Further reviews of membership will take place every year. Task groups will be set up as required and depending on opportunities available in the future.

It is also proposed that the RWSEG is the communication channel for the WSRP into the Coast to Capital LEP and that it is also the vehicle to ensure the representation of rural issues at this level.

The RWSEG will also work on rural economic issues outside the Coast to Capital LEP remit as appropriate.

The proposed remit for the RWSEG is as follows:

- Advise WSRP and Coast to Capital LEP on priorities for maintaining a successful rural economy in WS
- Work to remove barriers to rural business growth and employment
- Oversee the implementation of the Action plan for skills and enterprise in rural West Sussex and reviewing and broadening its scope to take in wider economic priorities
- Review the Action plan as required to ensure its priorities deal effectively with the issues that affect business and the community in West Sussex
- Monitor progress on the delivery of the plan and reporting to the WSRP
- Explore opportunities for new initiatives and projects, particularly those attracting funding that benefit the rural economy in West Sussex
- Work with the WSRP to deliver economic projects and programmes
- Work in partnership within and outside the county to further the rural economic development agenda in West Sussex

Recommendation

That the WSRP supports the proposal set out above to enable the RWSSEG a wider role related to the rural economy in West Sussex.

Ends