

# Harborough District Council

## Report to Performance Overview and Scrutiny Panel 11 April 2024



<b>Title:</b>	Update on Rural Strategy 2023-2028
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Report Author:</b>	Rachael Felts – Head of Community Partnerships
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr Jim Knight – Wellbeing Portfolio
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix A – Rural Strategy 2023-2028 Appendix B - Rural Strategy Action Plan Appendix C – Action Plan update

### Executive Summary

This report presents an update on the Rural Strategy 2023-2028 for the Harborough District which looks at how to address some of the challenges residents and businesses face as a result of the rurality of our district.

This report provides Members with an update on the actions undertaken since the Rural Strategy was approved by Cabinet at their meeting in October 2022. The overview of work undertaken during the last year to support this delivery of this Strategy can be found at Appendix C. Of these the main achievements have been:

- Delivered a Rural Crime event for businesses and residents
- Secured Rural Enterprise Funding
- Health & Wellbeing teams ran engagement events in rural communities
- Delivered the Tilton on the Hill EV car share and charging club

### Recommendations

- **To note the actions undertaken which supports the delivery of the Rural Strategy 2023-2028 objectives.**
- Scrutiny to review outcomes of this Strategy in 2026, with a final review in 2028. The review in 2028 will consider if a further strategy is required, or if outcomes can be embedded into business as usual within teams and/or other strategies.

### Reasons for Recommendations

To enable to Council to continue to delivery of the Rural Strategy 2023-2028 objectives to ensure we will build a future for the people of Harborough district that gives them the best life chances and opportunities.



# 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To note work undertaken within the first year of this five-year strategy to meet the objectives of the Rural Strategy which aims to enhance wellbeing and prosperity across the district.

# 2. Background

- 2.1 The development of a Rural Strategy for Harborough district was set out in the Corporate Delivery Plan for 2022. The justification for this was the acknowledgement that whilst Harborough district is a desirable place to live, work and visit, residents and businesses face a number of key challenges as a result of the rurality of our district.
- 2.2 A 12-month project to develop a Rural Strategy was funded by Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) to look at the needs and service gaps of our rural communities including a focus on the economy, housing, the impacts of Covid and the recovery needs going forward.
- 2.3 The Leicestershire Rural Community Council was commissioned to lead this work and undertake district wide community development at grassroots level to engage with citizens to understand their views, needs, concerns.
- 2.4 The results of the desktop research and engagement informed the development of the Rural Strategy 2023-2028, which is attached at appendix A. Along with the Strategy an Action Plan was prepared and this can be found at Appendix B. This Rural Strategy 2023-2028 was approved by Cabinet at their meeting in October 2022.

# 3. Details

- 3.1 The Rural Strategy 2023-2028 aims to create and maintain:
  - Inclusive, connected, and resilient rural communities, where everyone has the opportunity to participate, and access to the services and facilities they need.
  - An environmentally and economically sound rural district where the needs of farming, conservation, development and the economy are appropriately balanced.
  - A safe and welcoming rural district where everyone is provided with opportunities to enhance their physical, mental, social and economic health and wellbeing.
- 3.2 To do this, seven overarching strategic priorities for rural areas of the Harborough district have been identified, these are:
  - Rural Community – maintaining and strengthen thriving, inclusive, safe and resilient rural communities.
  - Rural Environment – safeguard and enhance the rural environment.
  - Rural Economy – to grow a prosperous rural economy.
  - Rural Wellbeing – improve mental, physical and social health.
  - Rural Connectivity – to create better connected rural communities by shifting focus onto digital connectivity and sustainable transport infrastructure.

- Rural Equity – to ensure no one is disadvantaged by virtue of where they live, work or do business by better rural proofing policies and services.

3.3 The report found at Appendix C outlines the work undertaken by officers to support the delivery of the priorities of the Rural Strategy 2023-2028.

3.4 The seven overarching strategic priorities are captured in Pentana, the Council's internal performance monitoring system, and can be viewed by Members.

## 4. Implications of Decisions

### 4.1. Corporate Priorities

4.1.1. The Rural Strategy contributes towards the delivery of all the Council's key Corporate Priorities.

### 4.2. Financial

REPF				Year 2	Year 1	
<b>Investment priority 1: supporting rural businesses</b>						
Grants to rural businesses to innovate & grow – (focussed on agricultural diversification, innovation, green technology & tourism) Yr 1+2	Grants to Grow	Intervention 1.1: capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas		£170,000.00	£80,000.00	47%
Grants to rural businesses to innovate & grow – max £20K per project, (focussed on agricultural diversification, innovation, green technology, tourism) Yr 1+2	Grants to Grow	Intervention 1.2: Capital grant funding for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation		£30,000.00	£20,000.00	67%
Grants to rural businesses to innovate & grow – max £20K per project, (focussed on agricultural diversification, innovation, green technology, tourism) Yr 1+2	Grants to Grow	Intervention 1.3: Capital grant funding for developing and promoting the visitor economy		£30,000.00	£20,000.00	67%
<b>Total</b>			<b>£350,000.00</b>	<b>£230,000.00</b>	<b>£120,000.00</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Investment priority 2: supporting rural communities</b>				<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	
Intervention 2.2: Capital grant funding for investment in capacity and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups	Community Grants	EV Tender		£155,000.00	£0.00	0%
Intervention 2.5: capital grant funding for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities	Community Grants	Grants		£204,681.00	£0.00	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>£359,681.00</b>	<b>£359,681.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total REPF Programme</b>			<b>£709,681.00</b>	<b>£589,681.00</b>	<b>£120,000.00</b>	<b>20%</b>

4.2.1 The Rural England Prosperity Fund, which complements the UK Shared Prosperity Fund has supported delivery of projects - this expenditure is noted above:

### 4.3. Legal

4.3.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the Rural Strategy.

### 4.4. Policy

4.4.1 No policy issues arise directly from this report.

#### 4.5. **Environmental Implications including contributions to achieving a net zero carbon Council by 2030**

4.5.1 No environmental issues arise directly from this report.

#### 4.6. **Risk Management**

4.6.1 No risk management issues arise directly from this report.

#### 4.7. **Equalities Impact**

4.7.1 No equalities issues arise directly from this report.

#### 4.8. **Data Protection**

4.8.1 No data protection issues arise directly from this report.

### 5. Alternative Options Considered

5.1 This report is to note the actions undertaken to support the delivery of the Rural Strategy 2023-2028. As there are no decisions, no alternative options have been considered.

### 6. Recommendation

6.1 To note the actions undertaken outlined above in this report which supports the Rural Strategy 20223-2028.

### 7. Background papers

- Scrutiny Panel – Communities 28 July 2022 [Meetings and Events \(harborough.gov.uk\)](https://www.harborough.gov.uk/Meetings-and-Events)
- Cabinet Report 10 October 2022 - [Meetings and Events \(harborough.gov.uk\)](https://www.harborough.gov.uk/Meetings-and-Events)