Cabinet Member	Councillor Osborne-Patterson		
Strategic Management Team Lead Officer	Jasvir Chohan, Executive Head of Service (People and Transformation)		
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Date	30 October 2018		
Ward (s) affected	Beare Green; Boxhill & Headley; Brockham, Betchworth & Buckland; Capel, Holmwoods;Leigh & Newdigate; Charlwood; Leith Hill; Mickleham, Okewood; Westhumble & Pixham; Westcott	Key Decision	No

Subject	Progress Update on the Mole Valley Rural Community Strategy (2017-2027)

Recommendations

1) The Cabinet is asked to note the progress made to achieve the action within the strategy and the proposed next steps

2) The Cabinet is asked to confirm support for a Rural Summit, to take place in February 2019.

Cabinet Summary

In February 2017 the Mole Valley Rural Community Strategy (MVRCS) was adopted by the Cabinet, setting out a vision for supporting Mole Valley's rural communities.

The MVRCS was based on an analysis of the rural area and an assessment of the specific issues and challenges facing the District's rural communities

The strategy outlined three strategic actions

- Rural Economy
- Rural Communities
- Rural Environment

These were then broken down further into six priority issues

- Digital Connectivity (Broadband and mobile)
- Rural Housing
- Community Safety
- Visitor Economy
- Community Assets

- Rural Based Businesses.

The Report highlights the key achievements made to date.

During the next six months officers will be

- developing and promoting the Rural Community Summit
- developing a clear engagement program to raise the profile of the MVRCS
- Identifying key priority projects for delivery in 2019-20.

Corporate Priority Outcomes

Environment
The MVRCS seeks to ensure the District is a highly attractive area with housing that meets local need. In particular it puts forward proposals for increasing the supply of affordable housing in rural communities and for enhancing the natural beauty of the rural areas.

Prosperity
The MVRCS seeks to ensure a vibrant local economy with thriving towns and villages. Specifically the strategy echoes the commitment to work with rural communities and businesses to help make them thrive.

Community Wellbeing
The Corporate Strategy indicates MVDC will make the most of local cycling opportunities to promote sustainable travel and support the rural economy while educating cyclists and other road users and protecting residents and businesses from the impacts of formal and informal cycling events.

The Cabinet has the authority to determine the Recommendations

1.0 Background/Introduction

In February 2017 the Mole Valley Rural Community Strategy (MVRCS) was adopted by the Cabinet, setting out a vision for supporting Mole Valley's rural communities.

The MVRCS was based on an analysis of the rural area and an assessment of the specific issues and challenges facing the District's rural communities

1.1 Progress

Section six of the MVRCS identifies priority issues to address to support rural communities. These are Digital Connectivity (Broadband and mobile); Rural Housing; Community Safety; Visitor Economy; Community Assets; and Rural Based Businesses.

The MVRCS identified areas where MVDC could take direct actions, but also where it could use its role as the local authority to influence the decisions of other organisations that provide services and facilities to rural communities in Mole Valley

Looking at each of the six priority areas in turn and the detailed actions within these, the Council has delivered the following;

Digital Connectivity (DC)

- DC1 – Working with SCC, identify which rural MV areas do not have superfast broadband and lobby Superfast Surrey direct. Work with LEP on possible initiatives for funding installation of superfast

  MVDC actively supported Guildford Borough Council's Expression of Interest with a bid to the Local Full Fibre Network Fund for a Surrey Hills initiative.

- DC2 – Promote BDUK schemes to help premises with <2MBps to access satellite to wireless alternatives

  Information was shared with local interest groups and rural community representatives such as Parish Councils. New information will continue to be shared as available.

- DC3 – MVDC to feedback to existing rural forums specific mobile coverage issues in MV to allow them to lobby for better mobile coverage within District

  Officers continue to work closely with SCC and actively participate in the Surrey Countryside and Rural Enterprise Forum to ensure that this issue remains on the rural agenda.

Rural Housing (RH)

- RH1 – Meet with Rural Housing Enablers to review best practice for rural housing

  The Council continues to fund and work in partnership with the Surrey Rural Housing Enabler employed by Surrey Community Action. There are currently two rural exception sites under consideration that the Enabler is working on in conjunction with the Council, parish councils, landowners and housing associations.

  There are currently two rural exception sites within Mole Valley, with 12 units at Darbyshire Close in Newdigate and five at The Spinney in Headley.

  The Surrey Community Housing Project Manager, also employed by Surrey Community Action, is promoting Community Led Housing Fund initiatives and has engaged with Resident Associations and Parish Councils. This has been followed by an awareness raising event at Leatherhead Leisure Centre, general promotion of the initiative and one to one working with interested groups.

- RH2 - Emerging DCLG White Paper and LEP policy and guidance on rural housing issues is disseminated to key local influencers and representatives

  Officers have utilized existing meetings to share new and emerging guidance coming from central government in relation to development in rural areas.

- RH3 – Local Plan to address affordable housing in rural areas, including for rural workers

  In the development of the new Local Plan work has been undertaken to identify suitable opportunities for modest extensions to rural villages. The aim being to deliver new housing, of a scale and type which supports the vitality of rural communities

  The Planning Policy team have been working closely with the Housing Team to establish appropriate new Local Plan policies for delivery of affordable housing, both District-wide and specifically in the rural areas. This includes working alongside Surrey Community Action's Rural Housing Enabler and the recently-appointed Community Housing Project Manager.

Community Safety (CS)

- CS1- Rural Business Crime is raised as an issue with the police and other relevant agencies

  Officers have established strong working relationships with the neighbourhood policing team to ensure that issues can be raised and discussed as needed.

  Rural Councillors continue to work closely with the Rural Neighbourhood Policing team to discuss and address issues within their communities.

  The police held a rural crime panel at Pippbrook in July 2018 and this was well attended by District and Parish Councillors, Council Officers and a range of other rural community representatives.

- CS2 – Cross-agency action is taken to tackle rural fly-tipping through proactive enforcement and prosecution

  The Council has adopted an Environmental Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy which covers the entire District and aims to tackle and reduce instances of fly tipping, litter and dog fouling. The strategy proposed the creation of a JET (Joint Enforcement Team) which would have powers to tackle these issues. A project team has been established to take this work forward.

- CS3 – Continue support for Mole Valley Rural Crime Panel, current and future rural community safety initiatives such as Country Watch and Rural Speed Watch

  Surrey Police have appointed a rural engagement volunteer who works with Rural Groups including the Rural Crime Panel and the Byways Working Group.

Visitor Economy (VE)

- VE1 – review the need for tourism provision within the District

  A Tourism Information Panel was established in November 2016. A survey was commissioned by the panel for Visit Surrey to undertake which looked at the current tourism provisions in Mole Valley. Evidence from this was used to inform the development of the Economic Prosperity Strategy.

- VE2 – MV to work with local stakeholders and partners to maximise value, yet minimise impact of cycling (both on/off road), equestrian and walking and

  VE3 – MV to work with East Surrey colleagues to develop an East Surrey public/private 'destination management partnership' (DMP) and

  VE7 – Use European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funding to deliver the Wheels, Feet and Hooves initiative.

  Following a successful EAFRD application, funding was secured to develop two Destination Management Plans. One spatial plan for East Surrey and a second more thematic plan to look specifically at outdoor pursuits within Rural Mole Valley (Wheels Feet and Hooves).

  Through the creation of these plans, significant engagement was undertaken with local stakeholders, partners and communities. This was through a range of surveys and workshops undertaken over a 12 month period.

  A wealth of information on the visitor economy has been collected as part of this process, which can be used as evidence to support the development of the Local Plan and the implementation of the Economic Prosperity Strategy.

- VE4 – Continue to promote and develop MV tourism assets such as the Deepdene Trail

  The Deepdene Trail HLF funded project has now come to an end. Since the launch of the trail 29,000 visitors to the trail have been recorded. Dorking museum continue to offer guided walks and these are proving to be very popular. Officers continue to work with Surrey County Council to resolve the issue of 'on site' parking at the Trail entrance – an application for funding to support this ambition, through the EAFRD Tourism Infrastructure, was successful at stage one and officers are working on the full application for stage two. Officers have investigated the network of WWII tunnels which have been surveyed and asbestos removed, with a view to exploring possibilities of securing future access to this highly important historic aspect. A new guidebook on Deepdene and the story of the trail is soon to be published.

- VE5 – MV to include the value & economic potential of the rural visitor economy within the new MV prosperity strategy

  The rural and visitor economy is one of the six main priorities within the Economic Prosperity Strategy.

- VE6 – Local Plan reflects the need for sustainable rural tourism

  An interim Policy Statement on Employment Land was agreed by the Council, which states that tourism related development will be encouraged provided the scale and impact of the development is appropriate for its rural setting and the development is consistent with other policies of the Local Plan.

Community Assets (CA)

- CA1 – Support local rural communities, identify and promote Register of Assets of Community Value

  Content on the MVDC website has been reviewed and updated, ensuring clear guidance is available to local communities and promotes the register of assets of community value.

  Since 2012, four nominations have been made under the scheme, two of these were successful – the Barnett Wood Land Allotments, Leatherhead and The Crown Inn, Capel.

- CA2 – MV Revenues ensure max take-up of National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) rural reliefs through proactive promotion of scheme

  NNDR relief is promoted as part of normal operational activity when revenues team make contact with Mole Valley businesses.

- CA3 - New MV Local Plan development process considers policy approach to protecting community assets

  Existing planning policies include protection of community facilities, including those within the rural areas. This policy framework will be refreshed and brought up to date as part of the new Local Plan. Identifying key community assets will be done through engagement with rural communities for example through parish council's.

Rural Based Businesses (RBB)

- RBB1 – Working with Partners, organise a 'rural roadshow' to assist rural business with grants, support information, rate relief information etc

  With the changes to European Funding and the ending of the Rural Leader Funding scheme, timing for the roadshows proved challenging as this was a

key topic of discussion. Officers are looking to trail the idea of rural roadshows again with attendees at the Rural Summit in February 2019 with the intent that these be held later that year.

- RBB2 – MV help promote rural funding opportunities such as Rural Surrey LEADER, C2C Growth Grants, EAFRD etc.

  Information has been made available to local businesses through workshops held as part of the development of the Economic Prosperity Strategy. Additionally information has been made available through the Councils website and shared by officers and members at relevant meetings.

- RBB3 – MV to support and promote initiatives such as C2C 'growth navigators' to help rural based businesses

  Officers continue to promote these opportunities as part of normal operations working with Surrey Leader and other funding providers.

- RBB4 – MV to keep engaged with rural focused organisations such as Rural Services Network, Action with Communities in Rural England, Country Landowners and Business Association, Farming and Rural Issues Group South East, Surrey Countryside and Rural Enterprise Forum

  Officers and Members are linked in with key rural stakeholders and organisations to ensure they stay abreast of local issues and latest developments.

- RBB5 – Local Plan to recognise the importance of rural businesses

  The Local Plan work programme recognises the importance of rural businesses and rules out further active exploration of rural employment sites as a component of housing land supply.

  In addition, an Interim Employment Policy Statement states that the Council will resist the loss of employment land in the rural areas to other uses and that extensions to business floor space in the rural areas will be considered favourably subject to compliance with other policies of the Plan.

The final recommendation within the MVRCS was the proposal that MVDC host an annual rural community summit. The intent being that this would provide an opportunity to invite rural stakeholders to review the progress on the action plan and assist with the development of recommendations for the subsequent year's action.

We have undertaken to hold a summit and given that the first year has now passed, we feel it is timely to start planning this and we will aim to hold it in February 2019.

Next steps

- Rural Summit, to be delivered in February 2019.
- Ensuring that Rural Community priority areas are considered as part of the 2019-20 Business and Budget Setting Process.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising as a result of this report.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising as a result of this report.

2.0 Options

1. The cabinet note the report and approve the recommendations.

2. The cabinet note the report but do not approve the recommendations.

The cabinet is recommended to agree option one.

3.0 Corporate Implications

Monitoring Officer commentary

The Monitoring Officer confirms there are no legal implications arising as a direct result of the report.

S151 Officer commentary

The S151 Officer confirms there are no financial implications arising as a direct result of the report.

Risk Implications

Option 1: There are no risks associated with this option

Option 2: There are no risks associated with this option

Equalities Implications

The MVRCS recognises that some rural communities do not have the same degree of access to services and facilities as those living in the District's towns and other built up areas; for example access to high speed broadband and transportation links. It seeks to address these differentials to help ensure greater equality.

Communications

As future actions are identified, appropriate communications will be considered.

Background Papers

Mole Valley Rural Community Strategy - http://www.molevalley.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=34287