

**Committee:** ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
**Date:** September 16<sup>th</sup> 2008  
**Title:** Rural Excellence update  
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**Agenda Item**

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### Summary

1. This report advises Members of the progress made from the recommendations in the Rural Excellence report.

### Recommendations

2. That the progress is noted by the Committee

### Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

IDeA Memorandum of Understanding  
Rural Excellence final report

### Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	Communication/consultation has been completed previously at the Rural Excellence Conference on 13 <sup>th</sup> March
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	None
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Sustainability	None

Ward-specific impacts	Across whole District
Workforce/Workplace	Staff time in implementing findings

### Situation

- 5 As members are aware, Uttlesford District Council were successfully selected to take part in the Rural Excellence Programme for Strategic Housing and Affordable Rural Housing. This involved working with the Regional Development Agency, Government Office and Town and Parish Councils to solve the most important housing issues for the locality. It also provided Uttlesford with the opportunity to lead the way in the development of rural housing.
- 6 Four objectives were agreed :
  - Publicising the evaluation of affordable rural housing schemes in order to gain wider engagement and support for such schemes.
  - Development of Parish Planning.
  - Understanding of how, and ability to, influence the Housing Corporation to access funding.
  - Relationship with Parish Councils to enable the communities to influence the Planning Policy Frameworks.
- 7 Throughout the programme, Officers were learning about good practice in delivering affordable rural housing. It has enabled us to adopt a model for evaluating affordable housing schemes on exception sites, develop closer links with the Sustainable Communities Strategy, work with partners to ensure that affordable housing features as a target within the new Local Area Agreement and also organise a rural housing conference on 13<sup>th</sup> March to highlight good practice to Parish Councils.
- 8 The mentors put forward the following recommendations and the following progress has been made:

Action	Progress made	Timescale
Strengthen the future governance arrangements for the Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing - Recommend the appointment of a member champion for affordable housing.	<b>Action to be determined by Councillors</b>	<b>To be discussed at Housing Initiative Task Group</b>

<p>Selection of a preferred Housing Association/RSL who will work with UDC to deliver affordable rural housing for renting.</p>	<p><b>This is not appropriate at the moment due to current market conditions.</b></p>	<p><b>Review in April 2009.</b></p>
<p>Recommend that members are given the opportunity to debate and clarify their commitment to affordable housing and this be reflected in the refresh of the UDC Corporate Plan</p>	<p><b>Action to be determined by Councillors</b></p>	<p><b>February 2008 when the Corporate Plan is refreshed.</b></p>
<p>Parish Plans are received by elected members and performance is subsequently tracked and reported upon</p>	<p><b>Parish Councils will be asked to keep the District Council up to date on progress made on parish plans.</b></p>	<p><b>By December 2008</b></p>
<p>Training is introduced to improve the capacity of members to give leadership on strategic and affordable housing issues</p>	<p><b>This is scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> September.</b></p>	<p><b>19<sup>th</sup> September 2008</b></p>
<p>More awareness-raising of the mechanisms for restricting housing to local people should be done in order to dispel this concern</p>	<p><b>As part of the Rural Excellence work, research was carried out to highlight the successes of affordable rural housing. This document will be supplied to all Parish Councils to dispel this concern and illustrate that properties have been allocated to people with a local connection.</b></p>	<p><b>By December 2008</b></p>

### Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The recommendations are not implemented	Low	Medium	Implementing the Rural Excellence mentors' recommendations will be given a high priority in workload planning