

REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 26 NOVEMBER 2020

RURAL PARTNERSHIPS FUNDING 2021-24

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the distribution of funding to the six Rural Partnerships in Aberdeenshire for the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree the distribution of funding to the six rural partnership as set out in Appendix 1 for 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, subject to the proposed arrangements for the Formartine Partnership Ltd/Formartine Rural Partnership (SCIO), and note that this will be the final three-year tranche of rural partnership funding;**
- 2.2 Agree that officers work with the Formartine Partnership Ltd/Formartine Rural Partnership (SCIO) to progress an improvement plan and to delegate authority to the Head of Economic Development and Protective Services to approve grant funding and any possible Service Level Agreement;**
- 2.3 Instruct the Director of Infrastructure Services to report back to Committee following the end of the first year under the arrangements approved under 2.1 and 2.2.**

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 The Economic Development Service annual budget for 2020-21 includes an amount of £185,400 which is used to support the six Rural Partnerships in Aberdeenshire (aligned to the Council's area structures). The service budget was approved at Full Council on 18th March 2020 (Item 5).
- 3.2 Pressure on budgets means that the Service must review the areas of activities that can be supported and reflect on the change of focus in response to Covid-19 and community resilience in the future.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 The six Aberdeenshire Rural Partnerships are an important part of local community infrastructure, providing advice and support services to third sector organisations within their areas since the 1990s. Each of the partnerships has developed its own business and delivery model, with some being part of much wider area-based partnerships that deliver a range of voluntary services and access multiple funding streams. The Council, through the Economic Development Service budget, are a core funder and this is topped-up with

£3,000 from the respective Area Committees. This is to deliver a core service that offers community economic development, funding advice, capacity building and support for community planning. The annual allocation of £33,900 to each partnership is managed by the Economic Development Service through a standardised Service Level Agreement (SLA). Area Committees receive annual updates on Rural Partnership activity.

- 4.2 A review of Rural Partnerships was approved on the 29th November 2018 - Infrastructure Services Committee (Item 11). This confirmed the funding for the 2019-20 financial year at £30,900 from Economic Development and £3,000 from Area Committees per partnership. Payment of the Area Committee element is paid at the start of the financial year and payment of the Community Economic Development SLA to the partnerships is made quarterly in advance and given the prevailing circumstances at the start of the 2020-21 financial year, it was agreed to continue funding the partnerships at the same level as 2019-20. This was formalised at Infrastructure Services Committee on the 18th June 2020 (Item 8) and approved until the end of this financial year.
- 4.3 During the 2019-20 financial year Garioch Area Committee and Formartine Area Committee have expressed some concerns over the delivery of the Service Level Agreement in their respective partnerships.
- 4.4 Economic Development and the Interim Area Manager (Garioch) have worked with the board and staff of Garioch Partnership. There has been progress with improvements in the delivery of community economic development and community planning. The partnership put in an additional temporary member of staff and have regular updates with Economic Development to ensure clear communications and better delivery of the SLA.
- 4.5 Formartine Partnership Ltd is the current recipient of the existing funding in that area. They have asked that the Council transfers the funding and SLA to the newly formed Formartine Rural Partnership SCIO. The new partnership are exploring the TUPE of their staff and have started the transfer of emails and systems to the SCIO. Officers have a number of outstanding queries to understand how this will improve their community economic development delivery, participation in community planning and the split between the organisations. Additional work is required with the directors, trustees and staff of both organisations. Therefore officers (including the Area Manager for Formartine) are recommending that an SLA is not offered for 2021-22. Alternatively a grant would be offered to the Partnership on agreeing an improvement plan. Future years' SLA would be dependent on this improvement. Should the partnership not agree to this then officers would explore other options to ensure that rural partnership type support was available to Formartine area.
- 4.6 The Rural Partnerships along with other third sector partners and public agencies contributed to the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.7 Rural Partnerships are asked to provide support to areas out with a community economic development remit and sit on advisory groups. However, these

activities if they are to continue will have to be resourced by partners as they will no longer be part of the core Council funded SLA.

- 4.8 With communities requiring more focus on support and budget pressures the SLA has been revised to demonstrate the outcomes that are funded. The framework for the SLA is attached in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.9 Area Committee budgets will also be subject to the Council’s budget setting process. As per the current SLA this could be appended with agreement between the Council and Rural Partnerships.
- 4.10 Discussions at the most recent Community Economic Development Partners meeting (January 2020) included consideration of how to support the longer-term financial sustainability of the partnerships, recognising that the Council faces significant financial pressures and challenges and would probably not be able to continue funding the partnerships at the current level in the medium to long-term. Officers from the Economic Development Service will continue to support the six rural partnerships, where appropriate and required, to diversify their income streams and develop more sustainable delivery models over the three-year period covered by this grant proposal.
- 4.11 The detail in **Appendix 1** represents the maximum available funding to each rural partnership/area. Along with Area Committee funding (4.9 above), there might be other opportunities to create a tiered level of SLA. Therefore, it is possible that Rural Partnerships may be offered a base level SLA and competitive bids from the Rural Partnerships would be invited to deliver an extended SLA.
- 4.12 In order to allow time to build the process option in 4.11 and to give rural partnerships reasonable notice then SLAs would be offered for 2021/22 as per the recommendations in 2.1 and 2.2 and the competitive bid process would commence 2022/23.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Economy and Enterprise” within the Pillar “Our Economy”.
- 5.2 This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Resilient Communities” within the Pillar “Our Environment”.
- 5.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

| Subject | Yes | No | N/A |
|----------------------|-----|----|-----|
| Financial | x | | |
| Staffing | x | | |
| Equalities | | x | |
| Fairer Scotland Duty | | x | |
| Town Centre First | | x | |
| Sustainability | x | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing | | x | |
|--|--|---|--|

- 5.4 An equality impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as **Appendix 3** and the following positive impacts have been identified: The action provides support for a wide range of activities tailored to the needs of specific communities, including supporting deprived areas and those from a disadvantaged socio-economic background.
- 5.5 There are staffing and financial implications. The Economic Development Service manage the Council's relationship with Rural Partnerships. The resource implication is unknown until the demand on the Council service is known, following the anticipated reduction on Rural Partnership activity. The proposed budget allocation will be met from the Economic Development Service budget and is subject to the Council budget setting process.
- 5.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level.
- ACORP 005 - Working with other organisations, partnership working to mitigate and manage community expectations through being clear that all parties understand the deliverables and outcomes through monitoring and the service level agreement process.
 - ACORP 006 – Reputation Management in the adjustment to level of support to communities, if not managed effectively, could potentially have a negative impact on the reputation of the Council.
- No risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level.

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report. They and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section F.1.1b of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to policy issues and resource matters (within agreed budgets) relating to Economic Development.

Stephen Archer

Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Reid Hutchison, Community Economic Development Co-ordinator, Economic Development, Date 28 October 2020

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 Proposed allocation of Rural Partnership Funding 2021-2024

Appendix 2: Proposed Community Economic Development Service Level Agreement 2021 – 2024

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 1

Proposed allocation of Rural Partnership Funding 2021 – 2024

| Rural Partnership | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|---|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Banffshire Partnership | £22,500 | £15,000 | £7,500 |
| Buchan Development Partnership | £22,500 | £15,000 | £7,500 |
| Garioch Partnership | £22,500 | £15,000 | £7,500 |
| Kincardineshire Development Partnership | £22,500 | £15,000 | £7,500 |
| Marr Area Partnership | £22,500 | £15,000 | £7,500 |
| Allocation Formartine Area | £22,500 | £15,000 | £7,500 |
| Total | £135,000 | £90,000 | £45,000 |

Appendix 2

Proposed Community Economic Development Service Level Agreement 2021 – 2024

**COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT BETWEEN ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL AND
THE RURAL PARTNERSHIP**

1 Scope

This agreement establishes the scope of work of the Rural Partnership and the relationship with Economic Development, Aberdeenshire Council.

2 Background

Rural partnerships have played a key role in developing and engaging communities in their areas. To ensure that community economic development opportunities and engagement continues it has been agreed that £22,500 for the year 2021 – 2022, £15,000 for the year 2022 - 2023 and £7,500 for the year 2023 – 2024 will be allocated to support the development and activities of the Rural Partnership for 3 years.

3 Definition of Service

Working closely with Economic Development the Rural Partnership will:

- (i) Promote Community Economic Development by helping new and existing groups throughout their area with information, implementation, and community engagement, to build inclusive/sustainable projects.
- (ii) Provide a local advice service to groups seeking to develop community assets and facilities. This should include options for organisational structures, governance, funding along with other areas required to help realise opportunities in their communities.
- (iii) Provide enterprise and administration advice to social/community enterprises seeking to develop economic opportunities.
- (iv) Provide evidence of the community/social enterprises supported and the impact this has made to local community economic development.
- (v) Encourage, stimulate and support community entrepreneurship within the area.
- (vi) Be an active participant in the Aberdeenshire Rural Partnership Federation.

- (vii) Contribute to the work of the Third Sector Strategy Group with the focus on Community Economic Development.
- (viii) Positively promote equality of opportunity for the whole population of the Administrative Area. Where the opportunity arises work with groups with protected characteristics to help them achieve positive impacts. Provide evidence of the work undertaken and the positive impacts achieved in your annual reporting and monitoring arrangements.
- (ix) Provide an agreed annual action/work plan for the year ahead indicating the outcomes and key milestones that the partnerships will support and facilitate with communities and community/social enterprises.
- (x) Attending operational and workplan meetings to ensure outcomes are being achieved and if necessary new priorities established dependant on emerging needs.

Example additional services (subject to budgets)

Working closely with Economic Development and the Area Manager the Rural Partnership will:

- (xi) Develop and support Community Action Plans and other appropriate processes for engagement of communities.
- (xii) Identify and implement ways to help communities understand issues around community planning and participatory budgeting. Together with partner staff, they will seek innovative funding and management solutions to overcome challenges.
- (xiii) To support and be an active participant in the Local Community Planning Forums.
- (xiv) Support applicants and the delivery of the Area Initiatives grants
- (xv) Contribute to the work of the Third Sector Strategy Group regarding the wider community development, volunteering and health and social care agendas.
- (xvi) Participate in Community Planning sub-groups for example Connected and Cohesive Communities Group.

4 Finances

(i) At the Infrastructure Services Committee on 26 November 2020, awards of £22,500, £15,000 and £7,500 for the next three years were approved subject to the conditions of this Service Level Agreement and an agreed Annual Action Plan. This agreement is intended to last for 3 years, subject to available budget.

(ii) The Economic Development element will be paid in advance quarterly payments as follows:

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 April 2021 1 July 2021 1 October 2021 1 January 2022 1 April 2022 1 July 2022 1 October 2022 1 January 2023 1 April 2023 1 July 2023 1 October 2023 1 January 2024 | |
|---|--|

(iii) The Area Manager element (variable option) £[x] is covered in this agreement and will be paid in one sum at the start of the year if under £5,000 or in quarterly advance payments if greater than £5,000.

(iv) The Council reserves the right to deduct any debts which may be due prior to making any further payments.

(v) The Rural Partnership must only apply the funding provided under this agreement for the eligible purposes described in this agreement. Any breach of the terms of this agreement by the Rural Partnership or if the funding is applied other than for eligible purposes, the Rural Partnership will be held in default. In such circumstances Aberdeenshire Council may in its absolute discretion suspend any further funding until the default is remedied, if it is capable of being remedied, or withdraw the balance of funding. In either circumstance the Rural Partnership shall repay to Aberdeenshire Council on demand any funding which has been misapplied.

(vi) Without prejudice to the foregoing generality the Rural Partnership will not engage in overt political activity, support groups with links to political activity or campaign for any political party.

5 Monitoring and Reporting

- (i) Economic Development will undertake an annual monitoring visit each year, which will incorporate a review of activity, outcomes, evidence of expenditure, annual action plans and future plans.
- (ii) An annual report will be provided by the Rural Partnership to Economic Development by 26 May 2022, 25 May 2023 and 30 May 2024. This report will be used as an update to the Infrastructure Services Committee and Area Committees.

- (iii) To host an annual round table discussion with the Area Committee, Area Manager and Economic Development to provide an update of developments in the area.
- (iv) Aberdeenshire Council's procedures on "Following the public pound" will underpin any reporting requirements.
- (v) The rural partnership undertakes to allow any Authorised Officer of the Council, or its designated agents, access to the books of account and other records for the purpose of confirming the accuracy, validity and completeness of information provided in relation to this agreement.

5 Terms of Agreement

This agreement will commence on 1 April 2021 and will expire on the 31 March 2024.

Signed on Behalf of Aberdeenshire Council

Date

Signed on Behalf of the [xx] Rural Partnership

Date



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

| EIA Version | Date | Author | Changes |
|-------------|------------|-------------|---------|
| Version 1 | 11/11/2020 | R Hutchison | |

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions including those that affect services the council delivers).

| | |
|---|--|
| Service | Infrastructure Services |
| Section | Economic Development & Protective Services |
| Title of the activity etc. | Rural Partnership Funding |
| Aims and desired outcomes of the activity | To support Aberdeenshire Rural Partnerships to provide a community economic development service to Aberdeenshire communities. Aberdeenshire Rural Partnerships provide project support, funding advice and capacity building to ensure that community projects are sustainable and achieve the best outcomes for communities. |
| Author(s) & Title(s) | Reid Hutchison, Community Economic Development Co-ordinator |

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment and explain what it means in relation to the activity you are assessing.

| Evidence | What does it say? | What does it mean? |
|---|--|---|
| Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints). | Annual Reports and Action Plans from the Rural Partnerships identifies the work they have supported. | Rural Partnership have been supportive of the Covid-19 pandemic response. |
| Internal consultation with staff and other services affected. | Area Managers, Area Committees | Provision and outcomes are variable in the six administrative areas. |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils). | Rural Partnerships | Partners have identified options for potential collaboration and the challenges of alternative funding sources. |
| External data (census, available statistics). | N/A | |
| Other (general information as appropriate). | Community Impact Assessment | The recent Community Impact Assessment confirms that there are vulnerabilities in some community facilities and capacity building support is required. |
| Stage 3: Evidence Gaps. | | |
| Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold? | None have been identified | |
| Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps. | | |
| What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form. | Measures: | Timescale: |
| | | |
| Stage 5: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups/areas? | | |
| These should be included in the action plan. | Continue to build on the partnership work which has been developed with the Aberdeenshire Rural Partnership Federation and the Third Sector Strategy Group. | |
| Stage 6: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity? | | |
| The Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Rural Partnerships requires that they 'Positively promote equality of opportunity for the whole population of the Administrative Area. Where the opportunity arises work with groups with protected characteristics to help them achieve positive impacts.' There is also an emphasis in the SLA on developing social enterprises which themselves have an objective of advancing equality of opportunity. This policy/activity therefore encourages local Rural Partnerships to create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity. | | |

Stage 7a:

Are there potential impacts on protected groups?

The protected groups covered by the equality duty are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Who is affected by the activity or who is intended to benefit from the proposed activity and how?
Complete the table below for each protected group by inserting “yes” in the applicable box/boxes below.

| | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Unknown |
|---|---|----------|---------|---------|
| Age – Younger | Yes Through increased opportunities on projects supported. | | | |
| Age - Older | Yes Through increased opportunities on projects supported. | | | |
| Disability | Yes Through increased opportunities on projects supported. | | | |
| Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers) | Yes Through increased opportunities on projects supported. | | | |
| Religion or Belief | | | X | |
| Sex | | | X | |
| Pregnancy and maternity | | | X | |
| Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual) | | | X | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender) | | | X | |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership | | | X | |

Stage 7b: Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy, activity etc. will or may impact on socio-economic inequalities?

This is about trying to be fair to everyone. Part of that is realising that not everyone may be starting at the same place. Some individuals and families may have low income, may have very little or no savings which means they are living from month to month therefore changes to council policies/services may have a greater adverse impact on them.

On this basis you should consider potential impacts on individuals/families by:

- Place: on specific vulnerable areas or communities (SIMD, regeneration, rural) e.g. housing, transport.
- Pockets: household resources, (Income, benefits, outgoings) ability to access a service
- Prospects: peoples life chances e.g.access to, or ability to access: employment, training, services (such as council or health) or support.

Groups of people who may be impacted include, but not limited to:

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed • Single parents and vulnerable families • People on benefits • Those involved in the criminal justice system • People in the most deprived communities • People who live in rural areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pensioners • Looked after children • Carers including young carers • Veterans • Students • Single adult households • People who have experienced the asylum system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those leaving the care setting including children and young people and those with illness • Homeless people • People with low literacy/numeracy • People with lower educational qualifications • People in low paid work • People with one or more protected characteristic |
|--|--|--|

Please complete by inserting “yes” in the applicable box/boxes below.

| Socio-economic disadvantage | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Unknown |
|---|----------|----------|---------|---------|
| Pockets: Low income/income poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing | | | Yes | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|-----|--|
| Pockets: Low and/or no wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future | | | Yes | |
| Pockets: Material deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies | | | Yes | |
| Place: Area deprivation – where you live, where you work | Yes Through increased opportunities on projects supported. | | | |
| Prospects: Socioeconomic background – social class i.e. parents education, employment and income, educational achievement. | Yes Through increased opportunities on projects supported. | | | |

Stage 8: What are the positive and negative impacts?

| Impacts. | Positive | Negative |
|--|--|----------|
| Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected. | The action provides support for a wide range of activities tailored to the needs of specific communities, including supporting deprived areas and those from a disadvantaged socio-economic background | |

Stage 9: Have any of the affected groups/areas been involved, engaged with or consulted?

| | |
|--|--|
| If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps? | Rural Partnerships have regular meetings with Area Managers and Services. There is also an annual informal session with Area Committees. This feedback has been the basis of the development how future Service Level Agreements and funding is awarded. |
|--|--|

Stage 10: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?

| | | |
|---|--|------------|
| These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form. | Mitigating Steps | Timescale |
| | Support all organisations to work in partnership to use existing resources more effectively | March 2021 |
| | Support all organisations to look at options for alternative funding sources to secure their sustainability. | March 2022 |

Stage 11: What monitoring arrangements will be put in place? How the EIA will be used to monitor the proposal

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires). | Annual reports will be provided |
|---|---------------------------------|

Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Please complete the appropriate box/boxes | 1 | No negative impacts have been identified –please explain. | |
| | The activity will provide resources to local Rural Partnerships, tailored to the specific needs of their communities. There will be a specific obligation on the Rural Partnerships to positively promote equality of opportunity for the whole population, including those with protected characteristics | | |
| | 2 | Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen. | |
| | | | |
| | 3 | The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen | |

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| Sign off and authorisation. | 1) Service and Team | Infrastructure Services Economic Development & Protective Services | |
| | 2) Title of Policy/Activity | Rural Partnership Funding (if appropriate) | |
| | 3) Authors: I/We have completed the equality impact assessment | Name: Reid Hutchison Position: Community Economic Development Co-ordinator Date: 11/11/20 Signature: | Name: Position: Date: Signature: |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| for this policy/ activity. | Name: Position: Date: Signature: | Name: Position: Date: Signature: |
| 4) Consultation with Service Manager | Name: Martin Brebner Date: 11/11/20 | |
| 5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service | Name: Stephen Archer Position: Director of Infrastructure Services Date: 11/11/2011/11/20 | Name: Position: Date: |
| 6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee. | | Date: 11/11/20 |
| 7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk | | Date: 11/11/20 |

| Action Plan | | | | | |
|--|---------------|------------|----------------|--|---|
| Action | Start | Complete | Lead Officer | Expected Outcome | Resource Implications |
| Support all organisations to work in partnership to use existing resources more effectively | November 2020 | March 2021 | Reid Hutchison | Existing resources more effective | Time commitment from partnerships and officers. |
| Support all organisations to look at options for alternative funding sources to secure their sustainability. | March 2021 | March 2022 | Reid Hutchison | Alternative model and funding sourced. | Time commitment from partnerships and officers. |