

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE RURAL ISOLATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

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AUGUST 2008

REPORT OF THE RURAL ISOLATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1. INTRODUCTION

A report published by the Commission for Rural Communities in July 2008 (see also Section 2) indicated that whilst there are many advantages to living and working in rural England, there remain significant challenges. The quality of life may often be better in rural areas, but this is not the case everywhere and for everyone. There are continuing concerns in rural communities about the decline in services in rural areas. Meeting affordable housing needs in rural areas remains a dominant challenge. Wages for people working in rural areas continue to be low. The character of large parts of England's countryside is changing as a result of built development. Over the last year there has been a rise in rural households living in poverty.

We have touched on a number of these issues in our study, but it was evident from the outset of our investigation that the subject of rural isolation is a vast and complex one. Whilst it was not feasible for us in the timescales that we had available to tackle every issue, we have tailored our investigation to focus on a small but important number of topics, and to produce a set of final recommendations that concentrates on meaningful improvements that can be readily implemented.

Our **Terms of Reference** were, therefore, as follows:-

" To complete a research exercise and make recommendations as to how access to and take up of services can be improved by looking at:-

- (1) ways in which we publicise our services;
- (2) whether or not services are targeted to specific user groups;
- (3) how services are accessed;

with a particular emphasis on vulnerable/younger people who live in areas where services are difficult to access."

How We Conducted Our Study

We commenced our investigation in early October and advertised our study in the local press inviting members of the public and other interested bodies to make written submissions.

The Group had two initial meetings – one on 4th October and one on 8th November.

Unfortunately, the study had to be put on hold from late November to early May due to Linda Morgan the original Support Officer for the Group being appointed to the post of Halstead Locality Co-ordinator.

However, we re-commenced our study with renewed vigour in May this year

with officer support being provided by Cherie Root, Customer and ICT Manager and Steve Bore, Scrutiny Manager.

Three further meetings of the Group were held in May, June and July respectively.

During the course of the study, members, working individually or in small groups, have researched specific areas reporting back to the Group with their findings. These have included:-

- Cllrs. Everard and Shelton meeting with Sheila Sutton, Area Estate Manager (Greenfields CH) regarding availability of welfare advice at Halstead Area Office;
- Cllrs. Everard and McCardle meeting with Julie Rigby, Benefits Manager to discuss how benefits/welfare advice is made available corporately;
- Members of the Group carrying out a mini survey sample of Parishes/Town Councils concerning whether they provide a Welcome/Information Pack about village activities;
- Cllrs. Everard and Shelton carrying out a mini rural services survey of Alphamstone and Lamarsh and Cllrs. McCardle and Spray carrying out one for Great Notley, and Cllr. Spray also carrying out some survey work in Earls Colne.

The Group has also had specific sessions with:-

- Tracey Corcoran, Community Transport Manager on the Community Transport Scheme;
- Kitty Barrett, Braintree Locality and Rural Policy Officer on rural isolation, and the 'Parish Update' publication (the Council's Town and Parish Council newsletter);
- Cherie Root, Customer and ICT Manager on accessing services via the Council's web site;
- Kitty Barrett and Jan Cole, Field Officer, Braintree District (Rural Community Council for Essex) on the Rural Services Survey 2008;
- Ricky Fuller, Service Delivery Manager, Essex County Council concerning initiatives being undertaken by the County Council in relation to the provision of services in rural areas.

We would like to record our thanks to all those persons and organisations who have contributed to this study.

2. SOME USEFUL FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT OUR RURAL AREAS

Rural Services Survey 2008

This 2008 survey (see item 1 in the Appendix) undertaken by the Council was an update of the one carried out in 2005. The purpose of the survey was to provide information about the services and facilities provided to residents living in rural settlements.

There was a Rural Policy and Action Statement (see next subheading below) that was put into place following the 2005 Survey, and the 2008 update aims to identify any changes that have happened since the initial survey.

The key area to have changed from 2005 to 2008 is access to ICT (Information and Communications Technology) in rural areas, and the use of ICT by the Parish Councils.

This survey was distributed to all members in the summer of 2008. It was a key source of information to allow us to focus on specific areas for further investigation.

One of the key findings of the report noted that there were large areas in the north of the District that identified their Service Centre as being out of the district (Sudbury, Clare and Haverhill).

Rural Policy and Action Statement 2005

The Rural Policy and Action Statement was developed from the Rural Survey 2005, to assist the authority in achieving its vision in the rural areas of the District, and to address a number of the issues raised in the Survey.

There were a number of actions that were identified and completed in this Action Plan and statement, including the following:-

- Improved exchange and support between District and Parish Councils – *Successful projects include the Parish Liaison Officer Service and the Parish Council Web pages on our website.*
- Improved Access to Council services and information, especially in rural areas – *Successful projects include developing the Council's website and providing access to services electronically, and providing services through rural libraries.*
- Transport Issues – *Successful projects include expanding the Community Transport scheme, and inviting County Highways representatives to the parish cluster meetings.*
- Anti-Social Behaviour - *Successful projects include the provision of SMART cars for Police and PCSOs in rural areas, and establishing the Community Warden scheme.*

- Housing Issues – *The projects in this category were predominantly around raising awareness of the Housing Strategy and Rural Housing Guide.*
- Planning Issues – *The main emphasis in this area concerned having improved and timely communication with the parish councils regarding planning issues.*
- Supporting the Rural Economy – *The key successes in this area, were setting up a partnership with the Rural Community Council of Essex and promoting rural tourism.*

Other key targets were:

- Supporting Community led plans.
- Protect and enhance the rural environment.
- Consider the special needs of excluded groups and the problems of rural isolation.

Rural Access Points

During the course of our study, we looked at a series of District maps (see item 2 in the Appendix) showing the access points for BDC, ECC, village halls, post offices, Parish and Town Councils, other access points. These illustrate graphically how sparse access points are in the north of the District.

State of the Countryside Report 2008

This is an annual report from the Commission for Rural Communities which has been published since 1999. There is a section which focuses on social issues facing rural communities, including

- Population and migration: the ageing of the rural population and the extent of migration to rural areas within England.
- Access to services: how service outlets are distributed, how close people are to them, how transport facilitates people's access to services, and access to services via the internet.
- Transport and travel: how far people travel and by what mode of transport, traffic growth and road accidents on rural roads.
- Housing and homelessness: the prices and affordability of housing in rural areas, the extent and character of homelessness, and the quality of rural housing.
- Health: the relative physical and mental health of rural people and how healthy their lifestyles are.
- Education: how well rural school children perform against the national average.
- Community cohesion: the strength of rural communities. The characteristics of governance in rural communities, the extent of participation in community and governance activities.

- Disadvantage: analysis of deprivation, fuel poverty and disability.

Key Findings for 2008 include:

- Internal migration has slowed in the last two years, and overseas migration has slowed in the last year, following a sharp increase from 2004.
- While rural areas have, on average, better health outcomes (which is related to the higher average incomes of rural areas), there is also a higher incidence of disease (which is related to the older population profile).
- While rural disadvantage is generally found to a lesser extent than in urban areas, the actual volume is not picked up in most area-based analysis, because it is not concentrated in specific geographic areas but dispersed across rural settlements. Our latest analysis seems to show increasing inequality within rural areas.
- Poverty appears to be increasing in rural areas, and more than in urban areas. Over the last two years for which data are available the percentage of population under the poverty line rose 3% in rural areas compared to 1% in urban areas.
- Most measures of economic performance show rural England to have a vibrant and active economy, but output per employee is not as high as in urban areas, and wages for jobs in rural areas tend to be lower.
- Work is not proving to be a route out of poverty for many rural employees and residents due to low pay in rural areas.
- Knowledge-based industry continues to grow, while land-based industry continues to decline.
- A sharp increase in the value of agricultural land and rising agricultural commodity prices has taken place over the last year.

What has/hasn't changed in 10 years

Issues and trends that have remained important since 1999:

- An ageing rural population.
- Concern about the quality of the countryside.
- The relative similarity in the make-up of urban and rural employment, with agriculture employing a relatively small number of people.
- A growing rural economy with many small businesses and self-employed people, but with lower wages than in urban England.
- Housing affordability issues; *see section 8 – Affordable Housing*
- Fewer service outlets for many service types in rural areas.
- Poor accessibility to services for those without access to cars.
- Less funding per head for many rural authorities.
- Faster traffic growth in rural areas.

Issues and Trends that have come to the fore since 1999

- Climate change was known about in 1999, but the implications (especially for rural areas) were only appreciated at the time by a small number of commentators.
- Use of the internet to access services – growth has been dramatic, but it has also raised the issue of service availability for those unable to access the internet, and impacts on the viability of more traditional methods of service delivery.
- Polarity of rural affluence and disadvantage – it is now possible to map much more data than was the case ten years ago, and the differences between different types of rural area are becoming more apparent. Peripheral and sparse rural areas show very different patterns to the more affluent commuter areas.
- Migrant workers – the expansion of the EU and greater worldwide migration has meant that rural areas have been affected by migration from overseas to a far greater extent than would have been imagined.
- Food security – three years ago food security was largely perceived as a ‘non-issue’, but with changes in the world economy and international security, combined with competing demands for rural land, it is beginning to drive policy again.

Source: State of the Countryside Report 2008

3. EXAMPLES OF THE CHANNELS USED TO PUBLICISE OUR SERVICES, AND TARGETTING SPECIFIC USER GROUPS.

Overview

This was a key area of our investigations and the most thoroughly researched, revolving around how BDC publicises its services and whether those services reach the members of the community who most need them.

Those of us involved with BDC know how much information and advice is available; but is this information easily accessible to residents, particularly those living in the more remote parts of our District?

The services provided by the Council are wide ranging and developing all the time, however there is enormous potential to expand and ‘spread the word’ even more comprehensively and efficiently.

Channels of Communication

Currently there are a number of publications available to residents providing a wealth of information ranging from the practicalities of welfare and benefits advice, refuse collection, paying bills etc. to a programme of leisure activities, festivals, arts & crafts.

Produced by BDC:

- The Welcome Guide – sent to every new resident and can also be accessed via the website. Provides practical information to residents new to the area to help them settle in quickly to their new home. The Guide was designed after consultation with a group of residents new to the District who were asked about the type of information they would find useful.
- The Contact Magazine – published quarterly and delivered to most households in the District (there is reduced distribution in some areas) but also available on the website, in local libraries and the Council offices in Braintree, Witham and Halstead. Contains practical information plus up to date news stories from around the District and forthcoming events. There are to be three versions of the magazine in future focussing respectively on Braintree Area, Halstead Area and Witham Area.
- Parish Update – this newsletter appears three times per year in March, August and December. The information contained in the Update is collated by Linda Hadley, Parish Liaison Officer. Copies are distributed to every ward member, Parish & Town Councils and Parish Clusters.

In addition, there are a number of other BDC publications including the Community Safety Newsletter, Walking for Wellbeing, Arts Guide for Braintree District to name a few.

Non BDC Publications:

*Parish Magazines - popular with residents - widely read to discover what's on in the locality. Our mini survey showed that 24% of residents used their Parish magazine to find out information about community activities, 22% used the newspapers and 21% relied on word of mouth.

Examples of Parish magazines working particularly well:

Belchamp Otten – magazine has won three prizes for its excellent production.

Birdbrook - produces a magazine every two months; around 18 pages in length and they are open to ideas on how to improve and expand it.

A number of Parishes did not have the capacity to produce a complete magazine, but found alternatives such as putting a flyer in their Church magazine.

Members of the Task Group were impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm shown by Parish Clerks in ensuring their villages were kept up to date, especially when it is recognized that many clerks are time constrained.

*Neighbourhood News – Free monthly newspaper delivered to over 10,000 homes and businesses in Halstead and District. Highly regarded as an excellent source of news and information.

*The Villager)

*The Higglers) All free and delivered to homes in and around Halstead

* Look Magazine) District and over the border in Suffolk.

Local Newspapers

Chiefly comprises: Braintree & Witham Times
Halstead Gazette

Widely read but feedback suggests that some residents prefer their local Parish/Church magazines as a source of information and where to go for advice as they are regarded as unbiased and having no 'hidden agenda'.

CONCLUSION

Members were grateful to Kitty Barrett who attended a meeting of the Task Group to give a presentation on the Parish Update. Members commented that the Update is full of useful information for residents living in rural areas. Kitty reported that feedback from end users is very positive.

Based on residents' comments and personal experience, members acknowledged that the Parish magazines and other publications, such as Neighbourhood News, were often more widely read and appreciated than the local, commercially produced, newspapers.

It is strongly felt that there is greater scope for BDC to publicise its services through this medium.

4. OUR MINI RURAL SERVICES SURVEY OF GREAT NOTLEY, ALPHAMSTONE AND LAMARSH, AND EARLS COLNE.

During late May, early June a number of rural areas in our District were surveyed to identify what service provision and take up is in rural areas, and also to encourage feedback as to how we can improve our services.

There were 46 responses, and the key messages that came back from this survey were that most people are happy to use telephone as the main contact method for rural areas, but feel that BDC could improve its Face to Face service provision for rural areas. There were mixed views about the website, with a number of people happy to use it to self serve, whereas others did not wish to use the internet, or found accessing the internet difficult.

To communicate any news, service issues and marketing, almost everyone asked felt that we could make better use of the parish magazines, as they are widely spread, and are well read amongst the population of each area (98% of people asked read them regularly).

This supports the 2008 Rural Services Survey, which also highlights that parish magazines are popular and well read.

There was a split view on the provision of mobile services. Most people asked were aware of them, but 38% of people asked used the mobile library and 28% the mobile police service.

A set of slides covering the responses to the survey are contained in item 3 of the Appendix.

5. OUR MINI SURVEY SAMPLE OF PARISHES/TOWN COUNCILS CONCERNING WHETHER THEY PROVIDE A WELCOME/INFORMATION PACK ABOUT VILLAGE ACTIVITIES.

Members undertook to contact Parish Clerks to ascertain if they produced a 'Welcome Pack/Information Pack' for their village.

The results showed that almost none did, mainly for time and resource reasons, however **Stisted, Gt Maplestead, Colne Engaine and Helions Bumpstead** do provide a specific Welcome Pack.

The follow up questions asked if their village had a Parish magazine, Church magazine or website and the responses indicated that many provided alternative methods of welcoming new residents. Some examples:

* **Belchamp Walter** – no Welcome Pack but they put a flyer in the Church magazine with any news. They also hold a Lunch Club, open to all, which meets on the same Saturday every month in the village hall. Members thought that this was an excellent idea and made good use of a village amenity.

* **Birdbrook** – no Welcome Pack but, as previously stated, there is an extensive Parish magazine which appears every two months. The Parish Clerk was enthusiastic about the idea of a Welcome Pack and would approach Linda Hadley the Council's Parish Liaison Officer to discuss the possibilities of producing such a publication.

* **Feering** – No Welcome Pack but there is a Village Guide which is delivered every two years when it is updated and copies are kept in the Parish Council office.

* **Great Yeldham** – no Welcome Pack but they take great pride in their website which they claim is regularly updated and made known through the Parish magazine.

6. PROGRESS ON THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGY AND ASSOCIATED ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES.

We were aware that a new Customer Access Strategy has just been approved by the Council, which will look to improve Customer Service across

the District. It focuses on five priorities that have been extracted from the Corporate Strategy 2008-2012. Each priority has a set of objectives that will be achieved between now and 2012, and an annual action plan to deliver these objectives. The priorities are set out below.

1. People will find it easier to contact us and we will provide speedier responses;
2. Greater use will be made of the website and more transactions will be able to be dealt with electronically;
3. People will be able to access a range of public services through a shared one stop shop and customer service facility;
4. People who come to live in the District will be able to easily find out about the District and the services that are provided here;
5. Our citizens will be more satisfied with how they feel about the Council and whether we provide value for money.

We were advised that one of the projects to be delivered in the first year is a review of face to face access points across the District. This will look at current service provision, identify required service provision and identify options to improve the service provided.

We would like to see a series of road shows held specifically in the rural areas to promote and inform the public on accessing the Council's services, and this is reflected in our recommendations.

7. TRANSPORTATION ISSUES.

Most members of the Group felt that the anecdotal evidence indicated that the lack of regular public transport services in the isolated rural areas of the District is one of the key issues affecting access to services. Residents in isolated rural communities who do not have their own private transport often find it difficult to access essential services.

A member of the Group commented from her own experiences that ".....young teenagers are often unable to stay for out of school activities because of lack of transport facilities.....Young mothers without access to a car during the day can be very lonely."

Another member highlighted the excellent 'hourly' local bus service in the rural areas of South Norfolk District that operated from 8.30am.

One member queried as to whether increased public transport capacity results in more people using that mode of transport, and that it would be useful to look to other districts for initiatives which resulted in people having greater access to and most importantly greater use of Council services.

The Group noted that the report of the Commission for Rural Communities 'State of the Countryside 2008' cites 'poor accessibility to services for those without access to cars' as one of the issues and trends that has remained important since its last report in 1999.

Community Transport Scheme

We had a specific session with Tracey Corcoran, Community Transport Manager on the Council's Community Transport Scheme. The scheme consists of three elements as follows:-

Social Car Scheme – this service is operated by volunteer drivers and is aimed at those people in the District: who have a disability or restricted mobility; who live in isolated areas not served by public transport; whose transport needs are not met by existing timetables; who are temporarily unable to access public transport.

Persons who meet the above criteria have to register with Braintree Community Transport to use this service. There is an annual registration fee of £10. Passengers are also required to make a contribution to the costs of the journey depending on the number of miles travelled. Journeys have to be booked with Braintree Community Transport at least 3 working days prior to the travel date. Transport is totally dependent on a volunteer driver being available. The service is not eligible to be used for hospital appointments – persons are referred to their local GP for assistance on transport to and from hospitals.

Dial-a-Ride

This is a door-to-door demand responsive service for people who have a physical disability and are unable to access conventional public transport. A specially equipped mini-bus is used to carry passengers with or without wheelchairs. The service is for people in the District who: are wheelchair users; have a physical disability and cannot access conventional public transport.

Again, persons who meet the above criteria have to register with Braintree Community Transport to use the service. There is an annual registration fee of £10. Passengers are charged a fare depending on the number of miles travelled. Journeys have to be booked with Braintree Community Transport at least 72 hours prior to the travel date, and bookings can be taken up to 7 days in advance. Hospital appointments are again excluded from the scheme.

Minibus Hire Scheme

Braintree Community Transport has three fully accessible minibuses which will transport 12 seated passengers. There are removable seats to accommodate up to 2 wheelchairs.

Any voluntary group who wants to hire a minibus must register with Braintree Community Transport and pay an annual £15 registration fee.

Vehicle hire cost is 80p per mile up to 100 miles. For journeys over 100 miles the cost is 50p per mile plus £25. There is a minimum charge of £12.50. These rates are inclusive of fuel costs.

Braintree Community Transport can provide volunteer drivers subject to availability. Groups may provide their own drivers, but all drivers must be registered with Braintree Community Transport and have completed the MiDAS (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme) course or be willing to undertake the necessary training .

Vehicles are available on a first come first served basis and must be booked 5 working days in advance. Block bookings can be arranged depending on availability. Again, use of the scheme for hospital appointments is excluded.

From all accounts, Braintree Community Transport is very effective and currently undertakes some 4000 trips per month. However, it has been a victim of its own success and is currently working to capacity, and needs more volunteer drivers.

The main drawback is that the scheme is based in Braintree and the social car scheme and 'dial a ride' does not operate at evenings or weekends. This disadvantages youngsters or indeed older residents trying to attend evening events. We would prefer to see the scheme based and run from a rural location.

We were pleased to note that the County Council's proposed Essex Rural Commission Task and Finish Group includes within its scope the following:

- Poor public transport that makes return trips to market towns difficult to undertake, and
- The importance of adaptable and economical community transport schemes.

Overall, we were disappointed that transport remains such a difficult problem for many rural areas in the District and we are particularly keen to see some advancement on solutions. In this respect, we also welcome the Task and Finish Group which the District Council is proposing to set up to study bus and railway services in the District.

8. AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Using the Commission for Rural Communities 'State of the Countryside 2008' report and the recent (July '08) 'Living Working Countryside – The Taylor Review' as background, together with comments from residents and members of the Task Group, the following can be noted:

1. House price inflation and availability makes it difficult for younger people to stay in their own village.
2. This is exacerbated by the desire to live in the countryside leading to an increased demand for housing and the presence of second homes.
3. There is a trend for young people to leave the rural areas for work and for study.
4. Older folk feel isolated when children cannot find homes in their locality. The balance of the community suffers and this has an impact on village schools, the viability of village shops and post offices.
5. There is a great reluctance by certain incomers to villages to allow any affordable housing to be built.
6. Farming land is available but not being utilised; a change to planning regulations would help.
7. Isolated 'pockets' of housing lead to problems with social contacts.
8. Average house price is £8k more in rural areas than in urban.
9. In rural areas only 17% of purchases are by first time buyers compared with 33% in urban areas.
10. The Choice Based Lettings system should help ease the situation.
11. Small groups of affordable housing, close to shops and other community facilities such as post offices and schools, should be encouraged.

Whilst welcoming the choice, control and transparency of Choice Based Lettings, a member highlighted the difficulties experienced by young people in finding houses to enable them to stay in their village, and that persons moving from an urban area to a rural location were not always able to assimilate to a rural environment.

SUMMARY

This subject was of great concern to Members but needs more in-depth research than this Task & Finish Group could provide and further investigation would be welcome.

9. INITIATIVES BEING PURSUED BY ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL CONCERNING PROVISION OF SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS.

It is timely that Essex County Council's Economic Development & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee is to establish an Essex Rural Commission.

Ricky Fuller, Delivery Manager ECC, attended our meeting on 16th July to explain the reasons for undertaking this review and outline the methodology.

Key areas of research that the Commission will look at and which are particularly relevant to this Task Group include:

- Housing costs & availability that makes it difficult for younger people to stay in their own village; included in this section is relevant planning issues.
- Inadequate local employment opportunities for village residents.
- A decline in the availability of local services: i.e. schools, post offices, food shops, public houses, banks, surgeries etc.
- Poor public transport – making return trips to market towns difficult to undertake.
- The importance of adequate and economical Community Transport schemes.
- Declining community activity and community life.
- The impact of future pressures on rural communities.

Members of the Commission will not be constrained by this list if there are other areas of work that merit further research.

The timescale of this study is relatively short:

- Draft summary report to be prepared by end Nov '08 and presented to Committee in February '09.

Ricky Fuller suggested that this Task & Finish Group's Report could feed in to the Commission's work and the Chairman be invited to give evidence at the appropriate time.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

CONCLUSIONS

This was, in many respects, a difficult area to research simply because of the broad scope of the subject.

There are many different strands worthy of investigation and it caused some frustration among the members that two of the 'hottest' topics, Transport and Affordable Housing, were felt to be outside the remit of this Task & Finish Group. However, both subjects have been covered in this report with the express wish that they be looked at in greater detail.

The mini surveys produced interesting results with many of those spoken to expressing satisfaction with the services provided but also suggesting plenty of ideas for improvements.

It was also encouraging to discover that residents find BDC easy to contact; most people know of some of the services provided but there are gaps in residents' knowledge.

This leads to the conclusion that "what we do, we do well; but we could do more".

It is to be hoped that the recommendations of this Task & Finish Group will be adopted by Council and go some way to fulfilling that hope.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Group make the following recommendations:-

- (1) The Council should make greater use of Parish magazines, and publications such as the Neighbourhood News and The Villager to publicise its services in rural areas e.g. a BDC page containing names of local District Councillors; contact points for BDC services etc.;
- (2) The Council's web site should include a link to every Town/Parish Council web site where these have been set up;
- (3) Discussions should be held with Essex County Council/The Police/CAB regarding the feasibility of using the mobile services provided by those organisations to publicise the District Council's services;
- (4) A series of road shows should be held specifically in the rural areas to promote and inform the public on accessing the Council's services;
- (5) The Council should lobby the appropriate agencies with a view to ensuring broadband coverage throughout the remote rural parts of the District;
- (6) The County Council's Essex Rural Commission which will be focussing, amongst other issues, on transport, and the availability and affordability of housing in rural areas should be welcomed and endorsed. (We also note that the District Council is setting up a Task and Finish Group to investigate Bus and Railway Services in the District and this is also to be welcomed given that the lack of regular public transport services in rural areas is one of the key issues affecting access to services.);
- (7) The Chairman of the Rural Isolation Task and Finish Group should feed in the Group's experiences and findings to the County Council's Essex Rural Commission, and the District Council's Bus and Railway Services Task and Finish Group as appropriate.;
- (8) Cross boundary working should be undertaken with St. Edmundsbury Borough Council (Haverhill Area Office) and Babergh District Council (Sudbury Advice Centre) with a view to the provision of information about BDC services at those sites given that residents in the northern part of the District look towards Haverhill and Sudbury respectively as access points for their local government services.

The Rural Isolation Task and Finish Group

Cllr. G. Spray (Chairman)
Cllr. M. Dunn
Cllr. A. Everard

Cllr. Mrs. M. Galione
Cllr. T. McArdle
Cllr. Mrs. J. Pell

Cllr. A. Shelton
Cllr. F. Swallow
Cllr. R. Wilkins

11. APPENDICES (NOT ENCLOSED)

Item 1 – Rural Services Survey 2008

Item 2 – Rural Access Points – District Maps

Item 3 – Slides covering the responses to the mini rural services survey of Great Notley, Alphamstone and Lamarsh, and Earls Colne.