



Leicestershire
County Council



LEICESTERSHIRE
Rural Partnership

Supporting Leicestershire's Market Towns and Rural Economies

Friday 23rd October 2009

EMRAF Rural Economies Sub-Group, Hinckley

Matthew Kempson and Helen Harris

Leicestershire County Council



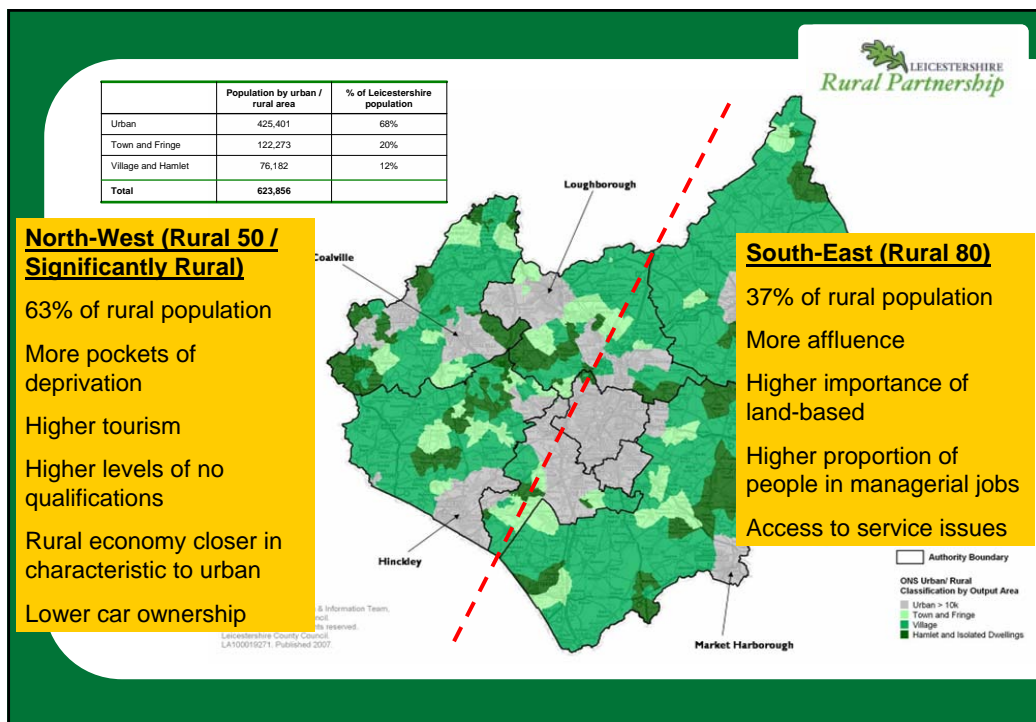
LEICESTERSHIRE
Rural Partnership

Leicestershire Rural Partnership: Introduction

Matthew Kempson

Rural Partnerships Manager, Leicestershire County Council





LEICESTERSHIRE
Rural Partnership

Leicestershire Rural Partnership

- **Established partnership – established in 1993**
- **22 member organisations and links to a further 20**

Why have a Rural Partnership?

- **To deliver better services and quality of life in rural Leicestershire**
- **Complement and add value to other Partnerships**

How?

- **20-year Vision, Rural Strategy and 3-year Action Plan**
- **Deliver, Co-ordinate, Influence and Advise**



Key Achievements (1)

- Funding programme c.£2m pa
- 8 rural programmes supported
- Influencing policy (national, regional and local)
 - Sustainable Community Strategy (Leics.)
 - Local Area Agreement (Leics.)
 - Multi Area Agreement (Leicester and Leics.)
 - Defra/OECD Study Tour (business support, rural transport, older people)



Key Achievements (2)

- Affordable Rural Housing
36 schemes – “Exception Sites”
- 10 Parish Plans launched
(50% of parishes with community-led
consultation activity)
- Rural Business Support Programme,
2006-09
- Vibrant Villages, 2008-11



Helen Harris

Team Leader
Better Places Team

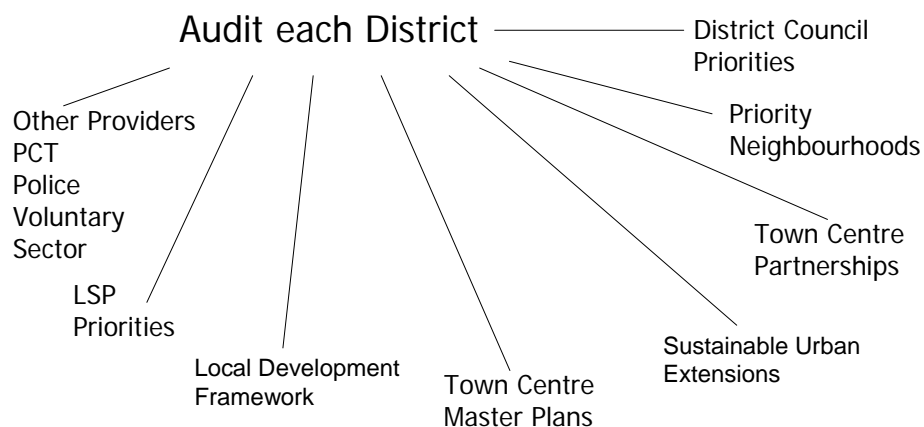
Role of the Better Places Team

- Established to support particular localities
- To coordinate the improvement of towns, urban areas and rural centres in Leicestershire
- For Leicestershire Together & Leicestershire County Council
- The exact role varies with each project
- The role is defined and agreed with districts, as lead partners

Geographic focus of Better Places work

- Main towns
- Urban areas of Leicestershire centred around Leicester
- Areas of significant housing growth e.g. Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs)
- Rural centres
- Priority Neighbourhoods

How are the priorities identified?



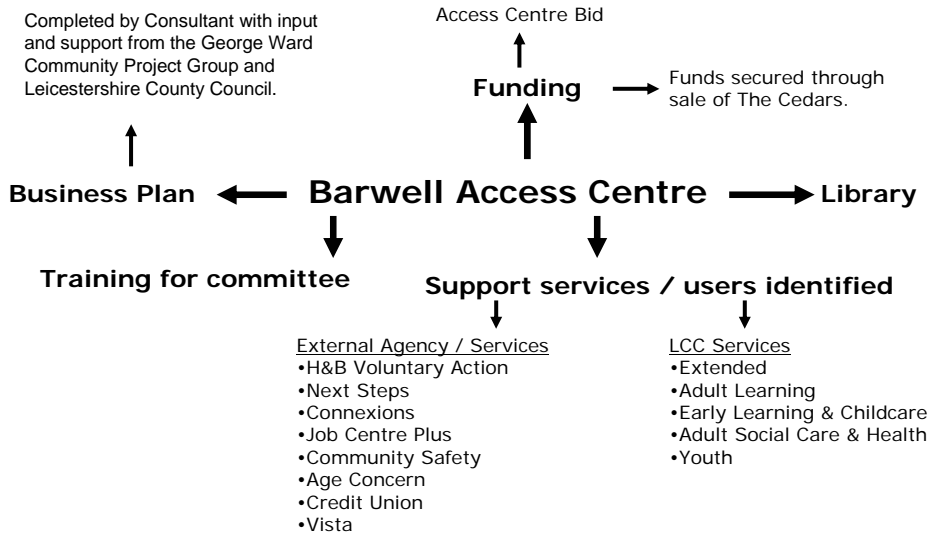
What happens then?

1. Producing Investment Frameworks by district which bring together priorities for all main town centres
2. Improving communication links
3. Assisting projects in finding funding
4. Assisting implementation groups, e.g. Town Centre Partnerships
5. Coordinating with the EDC (Prospect Leicestershire)
6. Helping to deliver Access Centre programme, e.g. in Bagworth and Barwell

Why this approach?

1. Develops and maintains relationships with partners
2. Provides joined up approach to services and improvements in a place
3. Buys in extra resources to match existing funding and widens scope of schemes
4. Develops best use of assets in partnership

Hinckley & Bosworth



Public Realm – Sherrard St, Melton

- Enhancement of the street scene in town centre
- Coordination with other services e.g. Highways improvement scheme
- Access grant funding from available sources e.g. the Place Shaping Fund
- Economic priorities mean limited support in future



Coalville



Short Term Priorities

Development of the Town Centre Partnership
Implement Coalville Town Centre Action Plan, including
Public Realm Improvements Future of the indoor
market

Medium / Long Term Priorities

Key site developments– supermarket including Belvoir
Centre extension Convert developer interest in the town
into exciting schemes Generate new town centre with
sustainable transport to support population growth

Sustainable Growth of Earl Shilton and Barwell

- Formation of 'Earl Shilton and Barwell Forward'
 - H&BBC, Leicestershire County Council,
Voluntary Action H&B, Leicestershire
Constabulary, PCT, Hinckley Town Centre
Partnership, Earl Shilton Town Council, Barwell
Parish Council
- Community driven – public consultation events held
Sept 08
- Masterplan consultants now appointed to produce plans
for both SUEs and two existing town centres

Thorpe Astley

- The case for retrofit at Thorpe Astley
 - Support for proposed community centre and to ensure provision of wider community facilities
 - £25,000 towards community centre offered by the County Council through the 08/09 Place Shaping Fund



What else?

- Planning support for local council
- Strategic and operational Economic Development support
- Business support and development of council services
- Statistical and evidence gathering
- Officer support to the TCM group
- Development of funding bids i.e. public realm & BID coordinators
- **Joint Services**
 - The team members are working with Districts to provide support in terms of planning, economic development and business support looking towards joint services in the future

What else?

- Promoting local retailers
 - Produced fashion directory
 - Circulated copies to town centre managers, hotels, District and Borough Councils, shops and other key partner organisations
- Managing grant programmes including
 - Rural Business Support Programme (ended in Mar09)
 - Vibrant Villages
 - Shop Front Improvements (Current Project: Earl Shilton)
 - Place Shaping Funds
 - Inspire Leicestershire (approved on 20/10/09)
- Lead role in organising events for communities
 - Leicestershire by the Sea

What else?

- Business Improvement District (BID) Coordinator's role
 - Promote BID Partnerships at all levels
 - Develop and submit a funding application for the 4 towns in Leicestershire Coalville, Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray and Loughborough
 - Help coordinate and draw in LCC officers as required
 - Give officer support to help out local delivery
 - Coordinate Leicestershire towns by having regular meeting with them
 - Provided financial support to each of the four partnerships
 - Circulated copies to town centre managers, hotels, District and Borough Councils, shops and other key partner organisations

How is the performance measured?

- Better Places Team’s work directly contributes towards local indicator LI 14 i.e. Satisfaction with Market towns and village centres as a good place to shop, visit and do business.
- The indicator is regularly monitored by the Performance Team within Community Planning Branch. The progress update is provided quarterly to CMT, Cabinet, LT Executive’s group and Leicestershire Together Board etc

- Baseline targets:

08-09	-	60%	(Met)
09-10	-	62%	(Red at Q2)
10-11	-	64%	(Prediction: Amber)

How is the performance measured?

- When the LAA indicator was set it was assumed that peoples satisfaction levels with a place to live, work and shop were influenced by the following factors;
 1. Improvements to the quality of the town centre environment- this was to be measured by looking at the number of public realm/regeneration projects that are going ahead. The reduction in the amount of public sector funding and section 106 monies available from developers has reduced meaning that fewer schemes are going ahead at present.
 2. Improvements to the quality/range of Retail outlets - all Leicestershire market Towns are experiencing an increase in the number of vacant units in the town centres, even though there has also been some stores opening. Major applications such as the Britannia Centre Expansion in Hinckley are now delayed because of the current economic climate. Major retail chains such as M& S are contracting and closing smaller unprofitable stores in Melton and Market Harborough for example and the closure of Woolworths has affected 6 Leicestershire towns.

How is the performance measured?

3. The number of events held in town and village centres acts as an attractor to increase footfall. Most of these events are public sector funded which is leading to a decrease in the number held which could lead to an increase in peoples dissatisfaction levels with their town centres.
4. The general appearance of the town centre - which is under threat of budget cuts is increasingly reliant on public services such as litter picking and maintenance of street furniture and less money is being spent on floral displays and public art.
5. An increasing number of people are claiming benefits as they lose their jobs which is leading to an increase in the number of people accessing these services via their Market Towns which could increase satisfaction levels.

How is the performance measured?

The Way Forward:

- Melton Mowbray, Lutterworth and Market Harborough have been measuring the performance of their town centres using the Welland Benchmarking system on an annual basis which also covers business confidence and visitor satisfaction. It is hoped to replicate this across the rest of the Leicestershire towns through the Rural partnership ,which will enable us to keep better track of this indicator before the next survey is due in summer 2010.

What's in the pipeline?

- Hinckley Bus Station
 - The scheme referred as “The Crescent”
 - will include a major food store, new cinema, bowling alley, restaurants and shops
 - Facilities like under croft car park
 - Project costs: around £80 million
 - Expected to start in 2012 and opening expected in 2014
 - The planning application is due to be submitted in 2010 after the consultation with local residents
 - Both Better Places and Highways are providing support to help the development meet the aims of Hinckley Town Centre Masterplan and to ensure suitable links are developed with the rest of the town, in particular Castle Street for future



What's in the pipeline?

- Bagworth Community Centre Redevelopment
 - **The refurbishments of the centre was identified within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Councils Core Strategy**
 - BP Team is working in partnership with Bagworth & Thornton Parish Council, the Neighbourhood Action Team, Bagworth & Thornton Facilities Group, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council and the Parish Plan Group to develop plans for the refurbishment
 - **Approximate cost: £500,000.00**
 - **Funding secured: £74,000.00**
 - **Application submitted to Village SOS for £350,000.00**
 - **The shortfall of £76,000.00 to be found by the partnership**
 - **Leicestershire County Council has also approved Bagworth as the preferred location for a Children's Centre. This will be completed summer 2010.**





Rural Business Support Programme, 2006-09

- Package of funding (LSEP (emda) and LCC funded)
- Land-based, tourism and micro-enterprises
- Over 300 grants awarded totalling £600k - £1.2m
- Rural Business Advice Fairs (c.4 pa)
- LRP Trailer



Roots at Barkby Thorpe

- Farm shop east of Leicester
- Redundant Building Grant
- Cold room storage
- Internal fixtures
- c. £14k awarded





Welland Valley Rapeseed Oil

- Family farm in Houghton on the Hill for last 150 years
- Farmers Development Grant - £5k
- Specialist marketing consultancy for brand development – “Project Kickstart”
- Available in a number of farm shops



Vibrant Villages, 2008-11

- 3-year grant programme - £240k
- Access to Services priority
 - Post Offices
 - Village Shops
 - Community spaces
- Retail consultancy support
- c.20 grants awarded





New economic landscape

- **New sub-regional arrangements – post SNR and devolution of funding to local authorities, MAA**
- **LRP identified as one of 5 Strategy and Performance Groups**
 - Indicative budget of £650k 2009/10
- **Economic Assessment – Economic Strategy**
- **Rural Sector Scoping Study (Ecotec)**
 - Land-based, food and drink, equestrian



Rural Economic Priorities 2009-12

- 1) **Supporting Market Towns and Rural Centres as Economic Hubs**
- 2) **Supporting the Growth of Small Businesses within Rural Areas**
- 3) **Developing Rural Sectors**
- 4) **Improving accessibility to employment, training and key services**
- 5) **Increasing availability of affordable rural housing**



INSPIRE Leicestershire, 2009-12

- Rural Business Support Programme, 2006-09
- Project outline
 - 1) Town and Rural Centres Business Partnership Development (Welland Benchmarking Healthcheck, Business Partnerships)
 - 2) Business Growth and Sustainable Communities (planning, tourism hotspots, sector led partnerships)
 - 3) Infrastructure Investment Grants (shop front, WOTS, redundant buildings, workspace provision, visitor economy, equestrian)
- Commence December 2009



Food and Drink Co-ordinator

- Strong sector in Leicestershire – Melton
- Melton Mowbray Pork Pie, Stilton Cheese
- East Midlands Food Festival
- “fragmented and lacking overall strategic co-ordination”
- Sub-regional Food and Drink Strategy





Next steps

- **Deliver INSPIRE and Vibrant Villages**
- **Continue to inform policy development at sub-regional, regional, national, international level**
- **Identify further opportunities to deliver against our priorities**
 - Rural broadband
 - Food Security vs Diversification

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