



## RURAL SERVICE PRIORITY AREAS

Board Meeting – 9 March 2006

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Board on developments in relation to the Rural Service Priority Areas (RSPAs).

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Within the Scottish Executive's policy framework of Closing the Opportunity Gap, there is a specific objective for rural Scotland 'to improve access to high quality services for the most disadvantaged groups and individuals in rural communities, with a view to improving their quality of life and enhancing their access to opportunity'.
- 2.2 In order to meet this objective, the Scottish Executive has set a target of achieving agreed improvements to accessibility and quality for key services in remote and disadvantaged communities by 2008.
- 2.3 With this target in mind, the Executive designated twenty-two Rural Service Priority Areas (RSPAs), as these areas experience particular disadvantage in service provision, access to services and subsequent opportunities.
- 2.4 Within East Ayrshire, three RSPAs have been identified as follows:
  - the rural area with the settlement of Dalmellington at its heart;
  - the rural area with the settlement of New Cumnock at its heart; and
  - Catrine and the surrounding rural area.

### 3. RESEARCH INTO SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY IN RURAL SCOTLAND

- 3.1 Local service improvement targets were to be agreed with Community Planning Partners for each area. To inform the discussion between the Scottish Executive and Community Planning Partners in this process, research into Service Accessibility and Quality in Rural Scotland was commissioned by the Scottish Executive.
- 3.2 The objectives of the research were to identify the priorities of people living in rural areas regarding key services for them and their community, and how access to and the quality of these services might be improved. The objectives were met through a literature review designed to source and assess the information, which already existed from previous research and consultation in these areas, followed by primary qualitative research undertaken through a programme of group discussions in each of the selected RSPAs.

## 4. SUMMARY OF SERVICE PRIORITIES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED FOR EAST AYRSHIRE

4.1 The direct primary research revealed that, although there were local issues raised in terms of service priorities, access and quality in each of the locations, there was a broad consensus across all regions regarding what the priority quality and access issues were for residents in rural Scotland. These are shown below and represent those services prioritised for improvement by all, or almost all, of the groups:

- access to **public transport**, which included buses, trains and planes (routes, timetables, integration of different services), and rising cost of private transport (fuel, tax, lack of petrol stations)
- access to **health centres, GPs and emergency services** (limited opening hours, seniority of staff, withdrawal of other services such as mid-wife and health visitors, dental services)
- access to **other emergency services** (such as withdrawal of the local 'bobby', longer travel times for the fire service)
- access to **refuse collection and recycling** (frequency, high journey times) and poor quality ('poorly' implemented or badly communicated)
- access to **post offices and retail shops** (shops closing, limited choice, high travel times as a result, loss of community centre)
- quality of **road maintenance** and perceived short-termist view on maintenance ('patching up', heavy lorries)
- access to and quality of **communication services** (poor reception and service quality of telephone, mobiles, broadband, television)
- access and quality of **utilities, water and energy** (poor quality of product, poor service from staff, belief that rural locations were unimportant)
- access to, and quality of, **housing** was also a concern in a sizeable minority of the communities consulted.

4.2 Detailed below are the particular service priorities and general issues, which were identified through the East Ayrshire workshops.

### Service Priorities

- Bank
- Dentist
- Energy
- GP Surgery
- Police and criminal justice system
- Public transport
- Refuse collection
- Road maintenance
- Communications - phones and mobile phones
- Water supply

### General Issues

- Underlying acceptance that many choose to live in a rural community, where there is poorer access
- Real need for service improvement but demands quite basic
- Very realistic and practical demands, often reinstating services to 'how they were'.

4.3 In addition, a number of East Ayrshire projects/initiatives were identified within the report as providing innovative solutions, including yipworld.com, the CHIP Van, Dalmellington Area Centre, Coalfield Community Transport (CCT) and 'Wheels2Work'.

## **5. KEY SERVICE PRIORITY AREAS FOR EAST AYRSHIRE**

5.1 At the Community Planning Joint Officers' Group (JOG) meeting of 20 December 2005, the following key service priorities were endorsed and form the basis of the funding bid to the Scottish Executive, which was submitted on 31 January 2006. A copy of the bids will be available for inspection at the meeting.

- diversionary activity for young people, in particular innovative methods of delivery in rural areas such as mobile units, which has translated into the proposal to install multi-use games areas in New Cumnock, Catrine and possibly Patna, and allocate a dedicated budget to Strathclyde Police to support youth diversion (Approximate cost £160,000 multi-use games areas and £30,000 Strathclyde Police);
- community transport, particularly in relation to access to services such as hospitals, which has translated into the proposals to establish a hospital visiting service from the rural communities to Ayr Hospital, and locate a CCT bus in the Doon Valley, two vehicles would be purchased and appropriate staff time provided (Approximate cost £50,000-£70,000); and
- the development of health facilities in New Cumnock, which has translated into the proposal to operate two evening surgeries per week at New Cumnock GP practice, offering routine appointments and a range of health promotion clinics and the employment of a part time locum GP for one year (Approximate cost: £30,000-£50,000).

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

5.2 Scottish Executive representatives have stressed that monitoring should fit with existing mechanisms, adding additional baseline information and outcomes relevant to this activity.

5.3 It is anticipated that within East Ayrshire this will mean reporting the additional activity within the Community Planning Annual Performance Report.

### **Funding**

5.4 The Scottish Executive has confirmed a funding award, subject to a satisfactory funding bid, of £300,000 for 2006/07.

5.5 There has been no indication, to date, regarding whether funding will be made available in the financial year 2007/08.

## **6. THE WAY FORWARD**

6.1 The funding bid is currently with the Executive for approval.

6.2 Following approval, baselines, outcomes and monitoring mechanisms will require to be identified in order that activity will commence by 1 April 2006.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 The Community Planning Partnership Board is asked to:

- i) note the progress in relation to the RSPAs; and
- ii) otherwise, note the content of the report.

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**20 February 2006**