Appendix C

East Devon District Council
Rural Services Standards

Reviewed

Reviewed and made current in December 2008.
For further review in December 2010.

Policy Approval

Recommended for adoption by Scrutiny Committee on 25 October 2006.
Approved by Executive Board on 13 December 2006.
Ratified 21 February 2007.

Reasons for introducing the Policy

For clarity of the Council's position in case of threat to rural services.

Policy Statement

This Policy provides the Council with an agreed set of East Devon Rural Services Standards which will act as a basis for future negotiation with agencies whose policies impact on rural communities in the District.

How will we go about it

This Policy is adopted as a formal Council stance on rural standards to use where and when changes are proposed, rather than as a document requiring a proactive programme of work.

Specific Policy Areas

These are the Council's expectations for people living in rural areas.

Schools and Children

- All schools in rural local authorities to provide access to a 'core offer' of extended services and activities provided in such a way that further exclusion does not result. Transport for extended services needs to be addressed so that this issue does not create exclusion. The core offer will include high-quality wraparound childcare available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. all year round; a varied menu of activities including a range of study support activities and other opportunities; parenting support; swift and easy referral to a wide range of specialist support services; and wider community access to information communications technology, sports and arts facilities, including adult learning. Half of all primary schools and a third of all secondary schools should have provided access to this range of services by 2008.

- Children's Centres shall offer good quality childcare, early learning, family and health services and advice on training and employment to children and their families in the most disadvantaged areas of the country. The national target for 2008 was to have 2,500 Sure Start Children's Centres, covering all of the 30 per cent most disadvantaged areas in England, increasing to 3,500 by 2010, one for every community.

- Presumption against closure of rural schools: published guidance requires that the need to preserve access to a local school for rural communities is taken into account in considering closure proposals.

- All schools to have broadband connectivity.

Older People

- Improve the quality of life and independence of vulnerable older people shall be improved by supporting them to live in their own homes, where appropriate and possible by:

    - Increasing the proportion of older people being supported to live in their own homes by 1 percent annually.

    - Increasing those supported intensively to live at home to at least 34 per cent of those being supported at home or in residential care.

Post Offices and Shops

- Formal requirement on the Post Office to maintain a rural network of post offices and services and to prevent any avoidable closures of rural post offices.

- To ensure the provision of information, experience and advice to threatened local food shops, and to those villages no longer having local food shopping.

- To lobby for reduced business rates to food shops and rural locations to recognise limited economies of scale.

- To continue to provide rate relief to small rural businesses.

- Seeking to coerce or compel supermarkets to provide local retail and distribution centres in rural areas, rather than just towns, and to carry local produce.

Health Services

- All hospital appointments are to be booked for the convenience of the patient, making it easier for patients and their GPs to choose the hospital and consultant that best meets their needs including transport availability. From December 2005, patients have been able to choose from at least four to five different health care providers for planned hospital care, paid for by the NHS.

- Community hospitals to be developed to provide a wider range of local services.

- All patients, including those living in rural areas, can expect to be offered an appointment to see a primary care professional within 24 hours or a GP within 48 hours. Also offered should be advance booking, improvements to the current reporting system and taking more account of what patients say in monitoring NHS performance. All patients will have the ability to get fast access when they need it and to book a GP appointment in advance.

Electronic Services

- To ensure that everyone who wants it can have access to the internet.

Emergency Services

- NHS ambulance trusts nationally are required to respond to:

    - presenting conditions which may be immediately life-threatening (Category A) within eight minutes irrespective of location, in 75 per cent of cases. A fully equipped ambulance should attend incidents classified as Category A within 19 minutes of the request for transport 95 per cent of the time, unless the control room decides that an ambulance is not required.

    - other emergency calls, which though serious are not immediately life-threatening (category B) should be responded to 95 per cent of the time within 19 minutes.

Ambulance services are required to take patients to hospital where the need is identified by a doctor as urgent. A response should arrive at the scene within 15 minutes of the time specified by the doctor in 95 per cent of cases.

- With the introduction of Integrated Risk Management plans, each fire authority is now responsible for determining:

    - the number of appliances sent to an incident; and

    - target times for attendance.

- Each police force sets response times locally and has targets that they deem appropriate to reflect the circumstances of their area.

Transport

- A national target has been set for the proportion of the rural population living within about ten minutes walk of an hourly or better bus service to increase from 37 per cent to 50 per cent by 2010.

- To promote community transport and youth transport provision for rural areas.

Local Funding

- To lobby for an improved funding formula for rural authorities to recognise the additional costs incurred and the fact that rural deprivation is not well revealed through government indices.

- To lobby for Council house sales money to be retained and spent in rural areas where need is demonstrable and lack of affordability is most acute.

Commissioning Services in local areas

- To lobby for local purchasing of services in rural locations where it supports the often fragile local economy, and this broader benefit may outweigh the benefit of a cheaper single supplier.

Planning controls

- To find means to support rural communities in obtaining planning gain from small developments in their locality.

- To ensure that rural affordable housing development specifically, and maybe exclusively, addresses the need for rental accommodation.

Housing

- To recognise the acute shortage of affordable housing in rural locations.

Outcomes

This Policy is a pre-prepared position statement to allow clarity should changes in services / development be proposed.

Who is responsible for delivery?

This Policy is principally for the guidance of Members and officers in the course of negotiations on changes in services / development.

Performance Monitoring

This Policy is reactive rather than proactive and hence routine monitoring is not relevant.

Policy Consultation

Members of Council only. NB: this document is based heavily on national government standards.

Policy Review

December 2010

Related Policies and Strategies

Local Plan
Economic Development Strategy