

# Rural proofing workshop – 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021

## Summary

### Possible recommendations / things to consider for the CP:

- Consider how it communicates to residents directly
- Consider conducting an asset mapping and data compilation of villages in the patch to assess precise needs
- Consider how we can work with neighbouring CP areas to support villages that are on the border and pivot towards our area even if they are in another CP area
- Consider and explore setting up a rural helpdesk for residents in the area

### 13 Attendees from 8 organisations - including:

- Wissett Parish Council
- Halesworth Campus
- Bungay Town Council
- Bungay Community Support
- ESC Councillors for Bungay and Wainford
- Community Action Suffolk
- Spexhall Parish Council
- Shadingfield, Sotterley, Willingham and Ellough Parish Council
- Beccles Twinning Association
- ESC Councillor for Beccles, Worlingham, North Cove and Barnby
- Cookpole Energy Action

### Initial thoughts and discussion

- There tends to be enthusiasm in villages to do things but need to be mindful of apathy and complacency
- Feeling that bigger organisations can do better
- In a smaller community, communities can do it for themselves and they try and fill the gaps – there is a self sufficiency which bigger towns can find difficult to develop
- Less likely to be left alone in a more rural area when there is a self sufficiency there
- Important to engage different stakeholders like charities/PC/Communities Council
- Villages are different and each have their own assets and ways – e.g. some smaller villages have their own village hall whereas larger villages like Worlingham have struggled to get a community centre
- Infrastructure can really affect rural life and connectivity – e.g. poor internet can affect how residents and especially younger residents can engage on things – so something like an internet café for youth can help with these
- Borders can have an impact on delivery of services – e.g. being on the periphery of two CP areas and pivoting towards one CP area when in another
- It was mentioned about towns like Halesworth which are market towns but are very close to villages and are quite rural to a degree – it has youth provision but could have more and needs to be better connected transport wise
- There can be issues in communities about things being down to the same people and when some volunteers leave, it means some provision can cease – need to have

flexibility on how people can engage e.g. finding things to suit 30 to 60 year olds who can't volunteer during work hours

- There can be some apathy – e.g: in some parishes, there are large numbers of vacancies for councillors on the parish council so that can be quite an obstacle
- When looking at the definition of rural proofing, it was noted about when business and community interests can sometimes be opposed to each other
- There was some discussion about transport including cycling, quiet lanes and road safety
- It was noted that communication is key to events and programmes in rural areas

### **Group discussions**

#### **Group 1:**

- Need to support community groups to be self sufficient
- CP can help influence on policies like planning and external organisations like post offices, banks and footpaths
- CP is felt to be doing well
- Communication out from CP to residents is crucial – two way conversation

#### **Group 2:**

- Difficult for people to appreciate the difficulties in rural areas if they live in market towns, engage with wider groups and reach out across areas
- Used to have a community bus, ran out of drivers and customers. Trial bus services in areas? Don't want to spend money on solutions that don't work, points out that not many used to use bus services.
- Vinny Van Go and Rural Coffee Caravan - taking things into the community rather than making people leave the community to find things
- Need to engage more with young people, as their needs and wants would be different to older people. Investigate the demographics of each community to identify needs?
- Utilise things like Zoom to bring people together, as more older people are using the Internet
- Suffolk Better Broadband programme, bringing fibreoptic cables to the village and better Internet connections. Better broadband and mobile coverage
- Building on the technology point, how do we know that people have the skills to use Zoom? Could we investigate how to give advice to those who are unsure?
- Involve schools, make intergenerational links, sharing advice and information
- An expert in each area who people can contact if they need help regarding technology, e.g. learning how to surf the web. A rural helpdesk. Could also work as a befriending service.

### Group 3:

- Gathering the data – parish, district, county level and seeing what the numbers are – and act from there
- Assess what the support needs are in the area
- Finding out what each village receives per head – per head, per town, per city, per village – precept and other investment
- Feeling that some villages are stagnating
- Feeling that some towns in the area are in a difficult position because they are considered rural compared to say Lowestoft or Felixstowe but are considered more urban compared to villages – there then lies the point about the services they need in their town
- Where villages lie on the border between two CP areas, partnership areas need to be working together
- Some places are different to each other – self sufficiency in villages needs to be celebrated ('we don't need you' is not a bad thing) but in other villages, there may be more support needed and that is no bad thing either
- There needs to be consistency in accessible transport – it was mentioned about the Bungay Hoppa model – once a week in Bungay; morning and afternoon
- Point made about responses from agencies can be more sparse in rural areas – e.g. it can take longer to get things done by Norse or Highways (e.g. potholes) in more isolated areas

### Final thoughts

- Finding out exactly what communities do have (asset mapping) and what they need
  - E.g. not everywhere needs a bus
- Engaging people in villages involves being smart on when people are there and how they want to engage – e.g. sometimes people are there on weekends (as opposed to out of the area for work) so maybe target relaxed community events to have conversations
- Ideas on how to engage
  - Survey to every house? Quite resource intensive
  - Attending existing events and meetings to ask a short set of questions? E.g. around services they need to access
  - Engagement with Parish Councils
  - Neighbourhood plans raw data
    - Drawback is NPs are at different stages in different parts of the patch and it may provide sporadic data
  - Facebook groups
  - Newsletters
    - Drawback is some areas do have distribution issues with newsletters

- Sam to send the slides

#### Comments from the chat

- Its a really good idea to publicise your services and help to individuals and parishes. Such as using community publications (The Sheaf), the South Elmham Community News, the Community News and the publications coming out from ESC and SCC
- Making use of community facebook groups may be a way of bringing in young people.
- Saints community FB and Halesworth Community FB and Friendly Bungay and also the Nextdoor Ap.
- Survey Monkey?
- Also needs paper, there are still a lot of people who don't do technology
- CAS does a rural services survey periodically so this may be another source of info - we are planning one for early 2022 (subject to Covid)

#### Feedback

1/ One thing you liked about the session	2/ One thing you have taken away from the session	3/One thing you would like to see at a future session
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to see people from other villages and our Councillors and the CP officer.</li> <li>• Good to have breakout rooms led by someone with more idea than me!</li> <li>• Liked the Zoom format</li> <li>• Helpful to be on zoom. even after covid will be better to keep on zoom. useful to know more. I will c/t to take interest. breakout rooms are helpful but perhaps need longer time.</li> <li>• Maybe not my remit, but always interesting to hear from other people about something I wouldn't normally get involved in.</li> <li>• Food for thought and hope some of the good ideas get followed through</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's not just me who has issues with ESC Planning Dept!</li> <li>• Need to spread the word far and wide about the CP</li> <li>• one take away would be that if the group functions on one issue at a time then progress will be made</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data from the Parishes if possible</li> <li>• More joined up and coherent policies from ESC as a whole.</li> </ul>