Guildford Borough

a thriving rural economy

As a successful, multi-faceted working landscape, Guildford provides a harmonious balance between beautiful natural resources, innovative business, enterprise and leisure.

Guildford Borough Council is launching a new Rural Economic Strategy for the River Wey catchment, covering the neighbouring Boroughs of Waverley and Woking as well as Guildford.

The Strategy will:

- sustain our rural communities
- protect our natural and built heritage
- enable enterprise and diversification in our changing countryside

A rural business mapping exercise and online survey of business needs was commissioned and, based on the feedback from Businesses, Councillors, Officers and others, this resulted in the Rural Economic Strategy 2017-2022.

The Strategy has five core policy priorities:

- Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities
- Infrastructure for Enterprise
- Landscape Management and Countryside Vision
- Green Space, Health and Wellbeing for Better Quality of Life
- Energy Policy, Generation and Supply
This 5-year strategy complements Guildford’s emerging Local Plan, and will be delivered in partnership with the local rural communities it serves. These include 23 Parish Councils, some of which have their own Neighbourhood Plans, reflecting the priorities people have for the places in which they live.

As the UK redefines its global identity through the two-year Brexit negotiation timetable, Guildford’s new Rural Economic Strategy lays foundations for a new community-based rural economy. Recent advances in communications technology, many originating from the University of Surrey or Surrey Research Park here in Guildford, are already inspiring businesses, entrepreneurs and inventors to re-define the workplace.

Increasingly, companies are relocating to countryside locations where the quality of life offers many benefits – as a result, hi-tech companies now use former farm milking parlours, small water turbines generate power and micro-breweries can start up on an out-of-town business park.

Such change enables the regeneration of traditional village communities and we will work with our stakeholders across rural Guildford to ensure that our policy priorities are sensitively addressed.

Guildford Business Forum’s Rural Group will monitor delivery of the Strategy. Co-ordinated by the Council’s Rural Economy Officer, the Rural Group’s members include environmentalists, farmers, landowners and producers. This shared concern for the landscape around us will enable people of all ages to become actively engaged in shaping a longer term rural economic strategy to complement the emerging Local Plan. We must work especially with young people to involve them in ensuring that Guildford’s countryside remains the adaptable working landscape it has always been.

The Surrey countryside has evolved constantly thanks to human intervention, and this new rural strategy shows not only how we have already shaped, worked and changed the local landscape, but that we are, and will remain, a part of its story.

For more information please contact Chris Stanton, Rural Economy Officer, on: 01483 444331 or email: chris.stanton@guildford.gov.uk

www.guildford.gov.uk/ruraleconomy

In partnership with Woking and Waverley