

Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director – Place

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	14 January 2020
Subject:	Lincolnshire Rural Support Network

Summary:

In October 2018 and January 2019 the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee considered papers regarding the Agriculture Bill. In January 2019 significant discussion focussed on the need to support the sector through the current and coming challenging period of change for Lincolnshire's farming businesses and the people they employ.

Members tasked officers with looking at mental health support in Lincolnshire. At the meeting the committee will receive a presentation from the Lincolnshire Rural Support Network who received a £40,000 grant from Lincolnshire County Council as a result of the work of the Committee.

Actions Required:

The Committee will receive the presentation from Lincolnshire Rural Support Network and follow with discussion.

1. Background

The Agriculture Bill failed to complete its passage through Parliament before the end of the session. This means the Agriculture Bill will make no further progress. However, when the United Kingdom leaves the European Union major changes to the sector will come about as the support received through the Common Agriculture Policy comes to an end. Current thinking would suggest that future support will be dependent on public goods – such as environmental benefits. Lincolnshire County Council will continue to engage with Whitehall as policy is developed.

Lincolnshire farming businesses are experiencing a perplexing present as well as an uncertain future. Many arable farmers are facing the challenges of an extremely wet autumn and many have been unable to drill winter crops. Many in the livestock industry are reliant on the export market and there is significant concern about the prospect of tariffs in the short term.

It should be noted that we also have Lincolnshire farming businesses that see opportunities and have proactively diversified developing different income streams – from energy businesses to tourism. Although at this juncture, many businesses wish to see more certainty before they make significant changes and financial investment for the future.

2. Lincolnshire Rural Services Network

LRSN is a volunteer-led organisation that provides pastoral and practical support to farming and rural people during periods of anxiety, stress and problems relating to their families and businesses.

Officers met with a number of organisations working across Lincolnshire and found that LRSN was pulling together a funding package to employ a mental health professional to support the work being undertaken. The £40,000 contribution from Lincolnshire County Council completed the funding jigsaw.

More information about LRSN can be found at their website: www.lrsn.co.uk and during the presentation to be given to Committee.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

N/A

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Vanessa Strange, who can be contacted at vanessa.strange@lincolnshire.gov.uk