1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on community development support currently being provided to the rural areas of Derg, Sperrin and Faughan.

1.2 To approve the allocation of £70,000 to RAPID for an extended one year service.

2 Background

2.1 Derry City and Strabane District Council area has a resident population of 149,500 with 71% of the resident population living within the urban District Electoral Areas (DEAs) and 29% within the rural areas. This equates to a total of 43,355 of rural residents.

2.2 Rural Development is a key priority for Council and is one of the main cross-cutting themes identified within Council’s Strategic Growth Plan and is embedded within the 3 main pillars: Economic, Environmental and Social.

2.3 The Local Growth (Community) Plans are currently being progressed and developed via a co-design approach with a Plan to be developed for the Sperrin, Faughan and Derg DEAs. These local plans will identify the needs within each of the Sperrin, Faughan and Derg DEAs and outline the key actions to be taken to achieve the required outcomes in line with the Strategic Growth Plan.

2.4 A number of Local Community Planning events have taken place in the Rural DEAs facilitated by the Interim Chair (Community Planning) and the Community Development Co-ordinator for each DEA. In addition, consultation has taken place with the Rural Network organisations, including Rural North West, RAPID, Dennett Interchange, Mourne & Derg Partnership and Villages Together. Officers are currently working via a co- design approach to establish Local Growth Partnerships in each of the 3 rural DEA’s.
2.5 A number of the key emerging issues arising from the Local Growth Plans in the three rural DEAs have been:

- Lack of access to Council, Statutory and Community Services.
- Need to invest in the Community & Voluntary sector through the provision of community development support.
- Weak Community infrastructure, over-reliance on volunteers, lack of paid community workers.
- Provision of good quality localised facilities.
- Need to reduce the fear of crime amongst vulnerable groups and address anti-social behaviour including provision of support services, personal and household safety.
- Need for Communities to feel safer and for good relations within and between communities.
- Need to maximise use of existing local community facilities.
- Need to develop support programme to build the capacity of the community and voluntary sector to ensure sustainability.
- Lack of access to services and rural isolation particularly among some Section 75 groups.
- Need to increase business and social enterprise development opportunities in the rural DEAs.
- Poor broadband and connectivity.

3 Key Issues

3.1 In recognition of the specific needs within the Rural DEA’s, including the need for increased support and capacity, the allocation of additional internal resources to rural areas has been considered as a priority.
3.2 Community Development support has been aligned to DEA’s, with one Community Development Officer and one Good Relations Officer assigned to two DEA’s. In addition further resources have been allocated to the Rural DEA’s.

- 6 x Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Community Development and Good Relations Co-ordinators allocated to the Sperrin, Faughan and Derg DEAs.
- 1 x FTE Peace IV officer focusing on embedding Good Relations into the local community growth plans and shared spaces issues.
- 0.5 x FTE play development officer focusing on the rural areas.

3.3 In addition to this, the existing contract with RAPID has been extended for one year. This contract will provide 2 x FTE equivalent Rural Support Officers working throughout Derg, Sperrin and Faughan DEAs. These officers will work flexibly across the area.

3.4 Following the Community Centre Review and subsequent Member recommendations, a dedicated Community space has been provided in Glebe and Victoria Bridge areas. Funding has been allocated to purchase accommodation for both sites and subject to Planning approval will be operational by September 2017. These premises will be Council owned and Community managed. Options for the Plumbridge area are also being explored.

3.5 The Community Centre Review and the Community Planning consultations also identified the need for revenue support for Community Centre Venues across the rural area. In recognition of this, Council has developed a new Community Centre Venues Fund. The Community Centre Venue Fund is primarily targeted at the Rural DEAs; the key weighted criteria being proximity to services. This fund will provide an investment of £360,000 over the next three years.

3.6 In addition to the above support Council’s grant aid programme (inclusive of Community Support, Good Relations and PCSP) have been allocated on a DEA basis, based on a formula of population, deprivation and rurality. This process has allowed for the development of a dedicated grant aid allocation to each of the three rural DEAs. The three rural DEAs have been allocated the following grant aid budgets;

- Sperrin DEA - £53,003.00
- Faughan DEA - £63,471.00
• Derg DEA - £81,428.00

3.7 The Rural Development Programme allocation of £6,180,000 to the rural area is also administered through Council. Officers across the Directorates are currently supporting Community groups with applications to this programme, which has made the following allocations:

• Rural Basic Investment - £2,586,000

• Rural Basic Services - £1,725,000 (This budget will be allocated utilising the same formula as the grant aid budget. There will be an dedicated allocation for Sperrin, Derg and Faughan DEAs, with an allocation set aside for the designated other rural areas situated within the Urban DEAs)

• Rural Village Renewal - £1,206,400

• Rural Broadband - £230,000

• Rural Co-operation - £432,600

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and other Implications

4.1 There may be delays in community groups receiving their grant aid funding as Council awaits Letters of Offer from key funding Departments.

4.2 The PCSP requires a final Letter of Offer from the Department of Justice and Policing Board and whilst the grant aid assessment process is ongoing the allocation of grant aid will be delayed.

4.3 The Good Relations Grant aid programme requires a final Letter of Offer from the Executive Office.

4.4 The allocation of £60,000 to RAPID for one year has been agreed within the rates budget and an additional £10,000 has been identified from within the Community Services Budget for the extended service for one year.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report.
5.2 Members approve the funding allocation of £70,000 to RAPID for the delivery of the Rural Support Programme for 2017/18.

**Background Papers**

None