

Council Meeting

14 February 2024

Motion submitted by Councillor Steven Leigh MBE under Council Procedure Rule 14

Backing Rural Businesses and Communities

This Council notes:

- The vital role played by our local farmers and rural businesses in driving our economy and enriching our communities in Calderdale.
- That rural communities face many challenges - from poor connectivity and transport links to limited access to key services and lower productivity rates compared to urban areas.
- That we must come together as a community to support and invest in our rural communities and businesses, who work tirelessly to help sustain our region.
- The hard work by Council officers in supporting rural communities and businesses, and by further empowering our rural communities, we can ensure they continue to thrive and contribute to our shared success.

This Council acknowledges that:

- The rural economy, including agriculture, is a lifeline for many residents and businesses, making it imperative to support it for a healthy and prosperous region.
- The Conservative Government's Rural Fund, as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), is providing additional support to rural communities.
- The Capital Funding provided by the Rural Fund will support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy.
- This will facilitate the much-needed diversification of income streams for farm businesses. Additionally, the funding will go towards enhancing community infrastructure, providing essential services and assets, benefiting the local economy and its people.
- This funding should be welcomed, and it will give a great boost to our rural areas.

This Council accepts that:

- With the Calderdale's commitment to reaching net zero, cooperation with the rural economy is more critical than ever, making this an opportune time for businesses to take advantage of this scheme and contribute to a more prosperous and sustainable future for Calderdale.
- Micro (less than 10 employees) and small businesses (less than 50 employees) are eligible for grants of up to £50,000 to invest in their growth and development, with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority having been allocated £2,567,601 to distribute.
- Calderdale Council should play a vital role in helping businesses and communities in rural areas benefit from this funding, which will be made available for applications until March 2025.

This Council resolves to:

- Support our farmers and rural businesses, by committing, where possible, to sourcing food from local suppliers for all council-organised events. This includes meat, dairy, and plant-based produce, which not only supports local farmers but also provides attendees with fresh and nutritious food.
- Promote stronger partnerships with our arable, livestock, and dairy farmers, helping to enhance our countryside while providing opportunities for diversification and the promotion of local produce.
- Encourage residents to shop locally wherever possible, making the most of the affordable and nutritious food that's available in our region. By doing so, we can help our rural communities to thrive while supporting the growth of the local economy.
- Promote the Rural Fund and provide assistance to those who want to take advantage of this opportunity.

Seconded by Councillor Blagbrough