

Notes from the RSN Executive meeting 22 May 2018

A summary of some of the main items discussed:

- The parliamentary Rural Fair Share Group, supported by RSN, met in May and received an informative presentation from Dan Bates of Pixel.
- Graham reported that formal consultation on the broad shape of the new foundation formula for local government grant is expected this summer. Civil servants appear to be considering addressing sparsity costs through a mechanism of area cost adjustments. If this is the case, RSN will challenge the approach as it will not produce the most beneficial results for rural.
- It was reported that RSN and the County Councils Network are jointly commissioning Pixel to produce robust evidence on the additional costs associated with delivering services in rural areas. This was warmly welcomed and will be a critical piece of work in influencing ministers over the new formula. A number of local authority members (County, District & Unitary) are being approached to take part in this research as examples to highlight the precise financial issues associated with rural delivery.
- A meeting of the Rural Services All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), facilitated by RSN, had been held focussing on the recent community transport consultation. A minister was present at the meeting and a formal response to the consultation has been submitted. The APPG is now moving on to a detailed inquiry into the rural aspect of the proposed green paper on Adult Social Care. It was also reported that RSN is working with the new National Centre for Rural Health & Care on this APPG inquiry with a formal APPG meeting planned for 3rd July.
- Details of the annual national Rural Conference were discussed. Bookings will go live before the end of May. Lord Gardiner is confirmed as a speaker along with Professor Tony Travers. In addition, a Countryfile reporter will be attending to garner research.
- The national 'Rural Panel' (a Rural England project) continues to develop as a mechanism for gauging the views of rural England on specific issues. The Countryside & Communities research Institute (CCRI) at Gloucestershire University is now looking to develop the Panel further, subject to agreement from the directors of Rural England.
- The RSN Communications strategy was discussed and it was agreed to move to a new single weekly bulletin to be published every week on a Tuesday. It was agreed that this will provide a concise and incredibly useful resource for all members and fully complement the new look website.