

Rural Services APPG

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services
28th February 2022 at 4:30pm
On-line via Zoom

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The purpose of the meeting was to hold the AGM, elect the officers for the current year and welcome the Minister for Care & Mental Health, Gillian Keegan MP, to discuss the impact on rural areas re the Adult Social Care Reform White Paper.

PRESENT

Gillian Keegan MP (Minister for Care & Mental Health)

MEMBERS

Flick Drummond MP (Meon Valley)
Rosie Duffield MP (Canterbury)
Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP (Ludlow) CHAIR
Helen Morgan MP (North Shropshire)
Lord James Crathorne
Arthur Virgo (Office of Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP)

OBSERVERS

Alex Osborne, Public Affairs Officer, Alzheimer's Society
Antony Bennett, Senior Parliamentary Advisor, (Office of Jo Churchill MP)
Patrick Murray, Head of Provider Markets Strategy & Reform, DHSC
Jess Nightingale, Minister's office, Dept Health & Social Care
Jacob Ratcliffe, Adult Social Care Reform Funding Team, DHSC
Alex Rennick, Policy Lead, Future Models of Care, DHSC
Darshi Veluppillai, Adult Social Care Reform Engagement Advisor, DHSC
A Braga, Minister's office, Dept Health & Social Care

In attendance from Secretariat

Graham Biggs MBE (RSN)
David Inman (RSN)
Bethan Aldridge – Minute taker (RSN)

1. Apologies for Absence

Peter Aldous MP (Waveney)
Sir Paul Beresford MP (Mole Valley)
Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP (Staffordshire Moorlands)
Rob Butler MP (Aylesbury)
Selaine Saxby MP (North Devon)
Derek Thomas MP (St Ives)
Baroness Mary Watkins
Lord Richard Best
Lord Ewen Cameron of Dillington
Lord Rupert Carrington
Lord Don Curry
Lord John Taylor
Rebecca Norkett (Office of Flick Drummond MP)
Kerry Booth (RSN)

Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone in attendance and in particular Helen Morgan MP as the newly elected member for North Shropshire.

The Chair explained that the APPG, working closely with the Rural Services Network (RSN), uses reports produced by the RSN to either contribute to government consultations or invite ministers to discuss particular policy development so that ideally there is input from the APPG before matters are settled.

5. Discussion of Work Programme for 2022

Whilst waiting for the Minister to arrive, Item 5 was discussed, and the following topics considered:

- Off Gas Grid properties and transition to non-fossil fuels – for next meeting.
- Levelling up White Paper and the extent to which that addresses or provides support for rural areas rather than just urban areas or regions– including public transport, health care, affordable housing etc. – for a meeting before the Summer Recess ideally.

Action: The Chair thanked everyone for their input and will arrange the work programme to take into account as many of these topics/themes as possible.

Action: The Chair and RSN to circulate a note re the off-gas situation and look to hold a meeting end of April/early May.

Action: The Chair asked that Helen Morgan MP be provided with information already collated on public transport/rural buses.

The Chair confirmed that the meeting was now quorate and continued with the running order of the AGM.

2. Notes of Previous Meetings

07.07.21 Meeting with Lord Benyon re the Rural Proofing Report 2020 and

15.09.21 Joint Meeting with the County APPG on Adult Social Care

(please see link [here](#))

Notes of both meetings were agreed as a correct record.

3. Election of Officers

The following were (without opposition) appointed as the Officers of the Group for the following year:

Chair: The Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP (Ludlow)

Vice-Chairs: Rob Butler MP (Aylesbury), Rosie Duffield MP (Canterbury), Julie Marson MP (Hertford and Stortford), Selaine Saxby MP (North Devon) and Lord Carrington

Treasurer: Lord Crathorne

Secretary: Lord Cameron

Helen Morgan MP was proposed as a Vice-Chair by the Chair, seconded by Flick Drummond MP and duly appointed.

4. Discussion on the impact on rural areas re the Social Care White Paper

Invited Guest: Gillian Keegan MP, Minister for Care & Mental Health (see attached Briefing Paper pre-Social Care White Paper publication & the RSN Commentary on the White Paper)

The Chair welcomed the Minister to the meeting to discuss the impact on rural areas re the Adult Social Care Reform White Paper and in particular on the new levy and funding arrangements for new duties and closer integration with Health.

The Minister gave her thanks for the invitation and opportunity to speak to everyone. In terms of the White Paper, the Minister wished to stress that this is the start of a 10-year journey and that it is one piece of the pillar for improving aspects of health and social care support at a place base level.

As an MP of a rural constituency, the Minister was aware of the challenges rural areas face. The Minister stressed that reform of the social care system has been needed for a long time; people are living longer, with more complex conditions and so it is important that the social care system works for everyone regardless of where they live.

There are many challenges including different employment markets, different provider markets, council versus self-funders etc. The Government is committed to big changes and not only to the charging system to protect individuals and families from unlimited care costs but also in a service to make it more sustainable, stable and to provide a rewarding career. There will be increased focus on supporting people to stay at home and for longer.

From October 2023, more individuals will be able to ask their local authority to arrange care on their behalf. It is unclear yet whether or not an individual can pay a top-up fee, how the sector will respond, or how many people will choose this route. A number of local authorities will be asked to be “trailblazers” in this area.

In terms of funding, the Minister confirmed that in 2022-23, £162 million would be provided to start to prepare the social care markets and begin the progress towards more sustainable rates. Then in years two and three, £600 million is available for both years for local authorities to move towards paying providers the fair cost of care.

Both Helen Morgan MP and Rosie Duffield MP queried the cost and availability of transport in rural areas to enable care professionals to fulfil their roles which has a major impact on the market being able to fulfil its contracts. The Chair recommended Shropshire Council be considered as one of the “trailblazer” Local Authorities.

Graham Biggs referred to one of the consequences of social care being a statutory duty for local authorities is that in rural areas, the cost of providing services is huge. To meet the costs of delivery of social care, rural local authorities take away money from discretionary services and one of those services is bus services, which in turn creates other issues.

Graham asked that rural areas receive a fair share of the quantum that Central Government releases and that it reflects the costs and circumstances of rural areas. Graham recommended that the formula that drives the distribution of grant needs to reflect certain rural characteristics to enable a fairer share of funding. The Chair agreed that the formula should reflect a fairer share of funding.

The Chair thanked the Minister for her time and concluded that he would like to arrange a further meeting with her and Graham Biggs to discuss items in more detail. The Minister thanked the Chair again for this invite and stressed that she was very happy to have a further meeting to discuss insights as that would be more informative.

6. Date(s) of Next Meeting

To be confirmed

Meeting finished at 17:42.

ADDENDUM:

- On 25th March 2022, the Government announced the five local authorities across England who will trailblaze adult social care charging reform. These are: Blackpool, Cheshire East, the London Borough of Newham, North Yorkshire and Wolverhampton. They will implement the reforms nine months before their national rollout in October 2023.