



**RMTG Meeting
Online via Zoom
16:30pm-18pm, Tuesday, 12th October 2021**

Minutes

Please note that attendance & apologies have been noted at the end of this document.

- 1. Welcome and Introduction to Rural Services Network from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive and David Inman, Corporate Director.**
- 2. Update on Composition of RMTG Officer Steering Group meeting.**
Update from David Inman, Corporate Director.
We envisage an RMTG Officer Steering Group of **19 Clerks/Officers** the following intended spread with existing representatives and those who are yet to be confirmed.
 - South West – we have two representatives.
 - South – we have two representatives.
 - West Midlands/West – we have one representative, **seeking a second one.**
 - Lancashire – we have one representative.
 - North West – we have one representative, **seeking a second one.**
 - Home Counties – we have two representatives.
 - Suffolk and Norfolk – we have two representatives.
 - East Midlands/East – we have one representative, **seeking a second one.**
 - Lincolnshire – we have two representatives.
 - Yorkshire – we are seeking on representative.
 - Northumberland/Durham – we are seeking on representative.

Highlights:

David Inman considered comments made by RMTG members at the last RMTG meeting and has reviewed the structure of the RMTG Officer Steering Group to ensure that the group is geographically balanced. It was agreed that the balance of this Group would be as outlined above. RSN will seek to fill vacancies for representatives.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

3. RMTG Meeting Schedule 2022.

- RMTG Officer Steering Group meeting – 14:00-15:00, Friday, 18th February 2022. **By invitation only.**
- RMTG Clerks Advisory Panel meeting – 10:30-12noon, Friday, 18th March 2022. Open to all RMTG clerks.
[Click here to register your place.](#)
- RMTG meeting – 16:30-18:00, Monday, 28th March 2022. Open to all RMTG Councillor representatives and clerks where a representative has not been appointed.
[Click here to register your place.](#)
- RMTG Officer Steering Group meeting – 14:00-15:00, Thursday, 29th September 2022. **By invitation only.**
- RMTG meeting – 16:30-18:00, Tuesday, 11th October 2022. Open to all RMTG Councillor representatives and clerks where a representative has not been appointed.
[Click here to register your place.](#)

4. RMTG Facebook Group Proposal. (Attachment 1)

Update from Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive.

Highlights:

The meeting received a short presentation from Kerry Booth about the establishment of a RMTG Discussion Forum as a private Facebook page. The rules for this forum were outlined and suggested hashtags (#) for most frequent discussion areas were agreed. Kerry made the point that more areas could be added if members felt there was need of them. The proposal was approved by the meeting. Members can add # to posts to group work to make it easier to find topics. The following # will be added to the forum to start off: #highstreet #market #ruraleconomy. RMTG Councils will be invited to this group in the coming month.

5. Young People in Rural Areas.

Update from David Inman, Corporate Director and a presentation from Nik Harwood, Chief Executive, Young Somerset.

Highlights:

This was one of the areas where the RMTG Officer Steering Group felt the RMTG group could play a vital role. Therefore, a section on Young People has been added to the updated RMTG Service Agreement. Unfortunately, there was no organisation in England now specifically focusing on matters appertaining to rural young people following rural organisation closures.

Nik Harwood, RSP Chairman and Chief Executive of Young Somerset gave a detailed presentation on the problems (and challenges) which young people currently face while living in rural areas in England. The situation relating to Rural/Market Towns was particularly concerning and he described them as too often the “forgotten middle ground”. He welcomed RMTG’s involvement in tackling such issues. It was agreed (as suggested by the service provision programme) that RMTG will immediately seek to constitute a national group of council members prepared to focus on the topic of Challenges Facing Young People in Rural Areas across England.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsonline.org.uk email: events@rsn.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

6. **Transport in Rural Areas.**

Highlights:

John Birtwistle, Policy Manager at First Bus gave members a presentation about his perspective about the Rural Transport situation. It has been agreed that transport related service reductions over the austerity period had been very significant across all rural areas of England. It is now fair to say that the Government is showing desire to look at ways of tackling transport problems in rural areas. They had set up a financial pot in an attempt to bring forward through a bidding process and new initiatives. John is aware of many requests made for bids through local partnerships and he was aware that many partnerships had been very actively looking to establish new ideas for bids.

The closing date for bid submissions was only weeks away and he encouraged members to find out what was being planned in their area and offered to assist if possible. John said he was very interested in being involved with the RMTG to tackle the most pressing issues facing rural transport across England.

7. **An Exchange of Post Lockdown Experiences from RMTG Members.**

Highlights:

A brief discussion between members about their local Post Lockdown experiences has showed varied situations and outcomes. An overall concern from the discussion emerged about Government's general view on rural areas not needing as much financial support as large urban areas because rural areas tend to rely on assisting one another independently. It was felt that this overarching conclusion reached by the Government about rural areas across England is increasingly dangerous due to the trend of rural areas having a significantly older population, relying heavily on volunteering roles; also, many services that had previously operated in market towns have now moved to larger regional centres to assist with cost cutting.

Graham was asked to consider looking at a wider consultation on the position at the beginning of 2022/23 to see if a common composite case could be identified starting from the premise outlined above.

8. **RSN Rural Market Town Group - Covid-19 Costs and Lost Income Survey.** (Attachment 2)

Report on outcomes by Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive.

Highlights:

Graham Biggs reported back that the number of returns to this consultation had been relatively limited, as the group is much larger, therefore making overall conclusive statements hard. The situation was further complicated as the position varied considerably across the evidence given from those who had experienced financial difficulties from COVID-19 to those who had not. Some Councils had acknowledged that cancellations of events meant they were better off financially than normal because these events were normally those which were subsidising the community involvement. Graham had

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

therefore concluded that from the evidence provided there was not an opportunity here to argue a case for subsidy from Government funds and that this matter could not be pursued.

9. Rural Situation Relating to Discretionary Services.

Update from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive.

Highlights:

Graham outlined the comparative rural/urban situation across a range of discretionary services between people living in areas categorised as 'rural' and those categorised as 'urban'. Discretionary services were of course being affected nationally by financial cut - backs but it was clear that in rural areas these cut - backs had had to be far more severe. The size of the variations both generally and across a range of services surprised many present. Graham was encouraged to take this forward to a comprehensive document so that members could share the situation with fellow councillors. It was also felt that updates from this base should be put together annually so that all councillors of member authorities should be aware of this statistical position.

10. Any Other Business.

An opportunity for members to offer their views on the group and discussed proposals.

11. *RMTG Service Agreement.

Revised October 2021. Update from David Inman, Corporate Director.

Highlights:

At the beginning of the meeting David Inman introduced RMTG members to the latest revised version of the RMTG Service Agreement and shared the version in the link below on screen. After one year's operation with the insight gathered from RMTG members and input from the RMTG Officer Steering Group we were able to identify the most pressing matters as well as services that the group would find most useful. The meeting formally ratified the proposed revised version of the RMTG Service Agreement.

[Please click here to view the RMTG Service Agreement](#)¹

¹ <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/rural-market-towns-group/rmtg-service-agreement.pdf>

Attendance & Apologies

Attendance

Full Name	Organisation
Graham Biggs MBE	Rural Services Network
John Birtwistle	First Bus UK
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Cllr Sheila Burry	Clare Town Council
Stephen Cobb	Tadcaster Town Council
Cllr Sharon Cullingford	Gillingham Town Council
Cllr Stephen Davies	Castor Parish Council
Julie Debbage	Leominster Town Council
Andrea Durn	Wotton Under Edge Town Council
Cllr Caroline Finch	Swanage Town Council
Cllr Jan Goffey	Okehampton Town Council
Cllr Peter Harris	Southwell Town Council
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Anthony Hirons	Lutterworth Town Council
Cllr Bob Holt	Westerham Town Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Terry Jordan	Wisbech Town Council
Cllr Simon Leney	Heathfield and Waldron Parish Council
Cllr Clive Parkinson	Thornbury Town Council
David Pooley	St Austell Town Council
Vanessa Saunders	Holsworthy Town Council
Cllr Ron Simpson BEM	Uppingham Town Council
Cllr John Stockwood	Bingham Town Council
Cllr Michael Thompson	St Austell Town Council
Cllr Alison Trenergy	Uttoxeter Town Council
David Wright	Market Harborough Town

Apologies

Full Name	Organisation
Tara Ball	Penistone Town Council
Cllr Belinda Bawden	Lyme Regis Town Council
Cllr Ann Bean	New Alresford Town Council
Cllr Amanda Brown	Great Dunmow Town Council
Lesley Bruton	Tenbury Town Council
Holly Goring	Uckfield Town Council
Mark Green	Lyme Regis Town Council
Carol Grey	Penrith Town Council
Liz Johnson-Idan	Chard Town Council
Cllr Paul Leadbetter	Charnock Richard Parish Council

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)



Cllr Antony Leech
Keli Nolan-Lyons
Cllr John Ord
Sue Petters
Cllr Eve Poulter
Angela Price
Jan Roomes
Cllr Kate Rouse
Cllr Jane Russ
Cllr Chris Ryley
Beth Searle
Cllr Chris Tennant
Cllr Mark Thorpe
Cllr Sarah Williams
Claire Windridge

Okehampton Town Council
Tenterden Town Council
Hexham Town Council
Barnstaple Town Council
Sutton Valence Parish Council
Ledbury Town Council
Hunstanton Town Council
Henley-in-Arden Parish Council
Westbury Town Council
Burscough Parish Council
Corsham Town Council
Earby Town Council
Verwood Town Council
Bridport Town Council
Faversham Town Council

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)