



RMTG Meeting – AI Summary

Online via Zoom

16.30-17:30, Thursday, 9th October 2025

Rural Services Campaign Update

Kerry Booth, the Chief Executive of the Rural Services Network, introduced the organisation's work in representing rural services across England. She discussed their recent "Delivering for All" campaign and a new survey launched two weeks ago to gather rural voices, which has already received over a thousand responses. Kerry invited participants to share the survey with their communities and emphasised the importance of gathering more data to support their lobbying and campaigning efforts.

Rural Policy Funding Disparities Overview

Kerry presented a comprehensive overview of rural policy challenges, highlighting significant funding disparities between urban and rural councils, with urban local authorities receiving 40% more in Government Funded Spending Power per head. She detailed various rural issues including housing affordability, connectivity gaps, and lower productivity levels, noting that rural areas could contribute an estimated additional £19 billion annually in tax revenues if properly supported. The presentation concluded with specific policy asks including fair funding for public services, rural-specific housing solutions, support for the rural economy, and completion of the Project Gigabit broadband rollout.

Knutsford's Bee Trail Initiative

Cllr April Johnson from Knutsford Town Council presented their Bee Trail project, which aims to support and educate about pollinators through a 3.5-mile trail around the town. The project, part of a four-year nature action plan focusing on different species each year, has increased pollinator habitats, attracted nature tourism, and improved public understanding of the importance of bees. The town council received a DEFRA Bees Needs Champions Award for their efforts, and while DEFRA could not support a national bee trail, April encouraged other towns to create their own bee trails and take local action to support pollinators.

Rural Economic Development Challenges

The meeting discussed Councillor Johnson's work, including their national award-winning project that helped grow the local economy by attracting nature tourists and

families to the town. Terry and Councillor Johnson shared their experiences with transport issues, particularly the reduction of bus subsidies in rural areas. Kerry mentioned her recent attendance at the Labour Party conference, where she engaged with the Rural Labour Research Group and discussed rural policy challenges. Councillor Wendy Croucher highlighted the accommodation shortage in her seaside town, affecting local businesses and healthcare staffing.

Rural Economic Development and Engagement

The discussion focused on challenges and opportunities for rural communities, particularly regarding economic development and community engagement. Cllr Wendy Croucher highlighted the lack of support for small businesses in rural areas and emphasised the need for spaces to accommodate emerging industries, while Kerry suggested balancing tourism with sustainable economic growth, referencing Cornwall's success in diversifying beyond tourism. Cllr Andrew Cooper shared Warminster's experiences with community projects, including a water meadow and toad protection initiatives, and expressed interest in improving community engagement. Kerry and Cllr Johnson discussed strategies for enhancing community involvement, with Cllr Johnson suggesting linking existing local initiatives to create a sense of collective action and shared ownership.

Rural Council Service Challenges

Kerry discussed the challenges faced by rural councils in delivering services, highlighting that urban councils spend double that of rural and discretionary services. She emphasised the need for a rural-focused policy that considers the unique needs of rural communities, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach. Cllr Wendy Croucher shared an example of how the closure of a Sure Start centre in Hunstanton and its dispersal into the community has been ineffective due to the small catchment areas in rural areas. The group agreed to share a survey and slides to gather more evidence on the challenges faced by rural areas, which will be used to support future discussions with government departments.



Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

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