



**AI Summary notes of
RVSG Annual Meeting
Online via Zoom
16.30-17:30, Thursday, 2nd October 2025**

Summary

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.

Rural-Urban Development Policy Challenges

Kerry discussed rural challenges, including limited public transportation, poor insulation in older homes, and difficulties transitioning to electric heat pumps due to high costs and insufficient government support. She emphasised the need for tailored policies to address these issues without compromising the rural lifestyle.

Rural Energy Policy Challenges

Kerry and Cllr Haynes discussed the challenges and benefits of living in rural areas, emphasising the need for tailored government policies that consider the unique needs of these communities. Cllr Brian Nowicki highlighted the historical removal of gas from high-rise buildings and the previous policy of rural gasification, advocating for its reinstatement to improve energy access in rural areas. Kerry explained the government's focus on electrifying heating systems by 2035, noting the challenges for off-grid properties and the need for policy flexibility to accommodate diverse heating solutions.

Rural Broadband and Infrastructure Challenges

Kerry discussed the challenges of rural broadband access and emphasised the importance of digital access for government services in rural areas, while acknowledging the need for in-person and telephone options. Cllr Brian highlighted the irony of providing gigabit broadband to a small village with only 220 occupants when larger villages lack

such access. Kerry explained that Project Gigabit aims to improve broadband in remote communities, though work has not yet started in her area. Cllr Barbara raised concerns about electricity resilience in her area of East Sussex, where power cuts during storms affect heating, cooking, and water supply, highlighting the need for improved infrastructure to support electric heating and EV charging.

Rural Services and Community Challenges

Kerry discussed the challenges faced by rural communities, including the devolution of services from district and unitary councils to parish councils, and the financial difficulties involved. She highlighted the importance of maintaining community services like public toilets, libraries, and youth services, which are often cut due to budget constraints. Cllr Steve Haynes mentioned that his parish council is considering taking on public toilets, while Cllr Brian Nowicki expressed concerns about the potential amalgamation of parishes, which could lead to a loss of identity and autonomy. Kerry also touched on the need for affordable housing in rural areas to retain local services and support the community, but noted that current housing developments often prioritise large homes for urban residents moving to the countryside.

Rural Affordable Housing Policy Challenges

Kerry discussed the challenges of affordable housing in rural areas, highlighting a local development where houses were sold at prices unaffordable to local workers. She emphasised the need to link affordability to local incomes and suggested that social housing could be a solution. Kerry also shared updates on her organisation's efforts to influence rural policy, including work with the DEFRA task force and an all-party parliamentary group. She encouraged attendees to share a survey with their communities to gather more input for future policy discussions.



Providing a voice for rural communities and service

providers Rural Services Network

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